

Editorial

Of all the topics to write about as editorial comment, I want to take up the subject of church halls. Perhaps because so often I find myself in them, it is inevitable that I am rapidly becoming a connoisseur of such places. They have a language of their own, and it might be salutary for me to try and translate some of the messages I am receiving as I travel around.

Victoriana

Certainly the most dismal church halls are those dating back a hundred years or more. Draughty, with high ceilings, dark woodwork, well worn wooden floors, they have a strong institutional character and remind me of some of those ancient hospitals which have mostly disappeared in recent years. They echo and people trying to tiptoe in late tend to send reverberations around the rafters so that everyone turns to see who the intruder is.

Some brave congregations have attempted to upgrade such inhospitable accommodation. But in spite of valiant attempts and large amounts of money, the Victorian church hall remains more or less what it originally was—an evidence of the old institutional modernity. Unless they have been totally renewed, their toilet facilities are at times a disgrace. In spite of the revival of interest on the part of 'yuppies' in Victorian plumbing and

toilet cisterns, such facilities were made to be cleaned regularly, and alas few hall-keepers seem to bother giving them that necessary attention.

However, there is one significant point about these halls we must not miss. Apart from the hazard of dry rot through insufficient ventilation in the right places, they are still standing and are still wind and water tight. Indeed, therein lies the heart of the problem with them. They were built to last and that is what they have done. There they are, monuments to an age when the quality of workmanship was high and when walls really were walls and roofs really did keep out the rain.

1930s

The pre-2nd World War halls are not much of an improvement. They tend to have a few more curves and graces, but they share most of the bad features of Victorian halls: the vastness of a gymnasium, the height of a barn, and the heating bills of mansion house.

The halls built in the 1930s respond a little better to upgrading. I have seen some beautiful new floors laid in them, and some have been at least partially carpeted and furnished with chairs which though they look smart can be very uncomfortable indeed. Their toilet facilities are at least in the 20th century and easier to keep clean than those dating back to the 19th century.

But they suffer the same handicap

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as the earlier halls: they belong to modernity and to the days when congregational life was institutionalised, and revolved around organisations, often with uniforms which required space for marching, drill and heavy equipment. Even though more congregations than I can count no longer have such organisations (or if they do, their numbers are a small fraction of a former generation), the fabric committee courageously maintain these expensive plants, pouring money into their upkeep without much of an idea or thought as to whether they are still needed.

*the vastness of a gymnasium,
the height of a barn,
the heating bills of a
mansion house*

'Modern' church halls

Many of these were notoriously badly built. When cornered and questioned about the appalling design and construction of these disasters, my architect friends have made endless excuses about new building materials not living up to the manufacturer's claims. Suffice it to say that scores of them have virtually had to be rebuilt within twenty-five years of their original construction and have been one of the heaviest and most damaging drains on the slender budget of struggling congregations.

These 'modern' halls, built in the last thirty or forty years, were at least a little more versatile in their provision of accommodation. But they were still

designed for the congregational 'institution' and assumed that marching, badminton and drama were prerequisites of the work and witness of the people of God.

Congregational organisations

Please don't for one moment think that I am slamming congregational organisations. All three churches in which I have served have had their fair share of organisations. Nor did I ever try to discourage them. My conviction was that if the Lord's people were being fed from the word of God and were growing in grace, their influence would percolate through to the organisations, and spiritually minded leadership would emerge which would cause them to be eminently useful in the work of the kingdom. And so in all of my congregations, we have either built halls, or at least have spent a fair amount of money on them in one way or another, adapting them to the Lord's work.

A funny new fad

In the denomination to which I belong, the rules say that congregations intending to spend money on buildings must first obtain the permission of a higher court of the church. Consequently, two or three times a year, the convener of the appropriate committee presents to this venerable court a list of applications from churches requesting authority to go ahead with their plans for upgrading, repairs, replacements and extensions. My own reaction as I glance at the agenda and see the list of proposed work is to give thanks and praise to God that something is being done about a few more of these terrible buildings.

But that is not at all the reaction of trendy young ministers who are

conscious of the homeless of our cities. They rise to their feet to berate these hapless congregations for wanting to modernise their dark, damp, dank buildings, and appeal passionately to the court to throw out such extravagant, wasteful plans when there are drug-addicts and alcoholics out on the streets.

For the life of me, I fail to follow this logic. I always thought the task of the church was mission. However the church is hoping to bring in outsiders (unless they be drug-addicts and alcoholics in need of a 'doss house') into the kind of accommodation I have been describing is quite beyond me. It always seemed clear enough to me that if I was going to invite young, middle-aged or elderly people into a church hall, I would want them to feel at home, and not as if they were entering a 19th century asylum. Anyway, so far the trendy young ministers who don't want halls to be brought into the 20th century (just in time before it closes) have not yet succeeded in their aim of halting the snail's forward movement, though once or twice they have come too near to it for comfort.

Our needs for mission

At last I am coming to the reason for taking up this subject. What delights me as I travel round is occasionally to find a fellowship which has asked some radical questions and has then prayerfully sought to answer them by providing for the real needs of an active, living, evangelical church. Yes, I have seen a few church plants which would delight the heart of any zealous pastor. Let me say why.

First, these halls have ideal accommodation for serious Bible Study and Prayer. They have rooms which are a realistic size and can hold a few dozen people. They are

comfortably furnished, tastefully decorated with curtains and carpets and with chairs which don't inhibit the circulation of the blood in the lower parts of the body. They are well ventilated (so that the brains of those in them can keep on operating), and they are warm so that people don't sit muffled up as if on an expedition to the polar regions. Some planning committee has made provision for the people of God to take prayer seriously.

Second, such halls also have provision for inviting non-church goers into an attractive environment where they will feel entirely at home and where the Bible can be studied in a small group sitting in comfortable, easy chairs. There is provision of a television and video so that useful, up-to-date study material can be used. Supper can be provided without having to be eaten on cracked plates with twisted, worn out cutlery (have you ever eaten with spoons and forks which were thrown out by some householder in the 50s, but were rescued from the garbage bin to be recycled into the church hall?). I'm not advocating anything lavish, only provision of decent crockery, cutlery and kitchen facilities one would expect to find in any average British home—and if in an average home, why not in the church of God?

Third, there is a library of good Christian books, plus an office with computer, photocopier and telephone. And there are also toilet facilities of which no one need be ashamed. I have even seen some church halls (in Ireland) with showers to enable young people from other congregations to come and stay for a week-end to share fellowship, evangelism and Bible teaching.

Fourth, there is provision for babies. Someone has taken seriously the

excellent idea that parents should be encouraged to bring their children to church from their very earliest days. So there is a sound-proofed room with several cots, to which the service is relayed and where mothers can sit with babies which may be restless and tending to cry. There they can feed them, change them and yet be part of the worship of God's people.

Serious about evangelism

I conclude by saying that I have become convinced that if a fellowship is really serious about evangelism, they will pray and plan to build or adapt accommodation which will be appropriate and ideal for welcoming outsiders who would be bewildered to be ushered into the halls of a former generation.

It may well require a five year (even a ten year) plan. However unless we hasten in this challenge, we will see a drifting away from the historic denominations of today's younger people. It is not that the work of God will cease. Never. Rather is it that many congregations will cease to exist (it's already happening) and new fellowships will spring up which are willing to change and adapt to new approaches in evangelism.

Such projects need leadership, inspiration and massive motivation. Some congregations baulk at the cost and when presented with the challenge draw back and refuse all change. There are plenty of examples in scripture of the blight that falls on such short-sightedness. Those who do respond are the ones that really are serious about evangelism. Their provision is not merely for themselves and their own families (which of course is important) but for those others we believe Christ would have us win for him.

Therefore pray about your halls. Ask

God for vision—the vision of those who are without Christ; the vision as to how they may be reached with his love; the vision as to what tools are needed to enable the good news to be shared with them. 'Without vision...' Do you know the end of that quotation?

*pray about your halls...
ask God for vision*

Reformation Today

James Montgomery Boice

I begin by reviewing a little of what I see as having happened these thirty years I've been in the ministry, particularly with a view toward the challenge we face today in the broad evangelical church. I must make it clear my comments grow out of my own experience, largely in the American church. I am aware there is no easy way of carrying one experience over to another but I do suspect the problems we have been wrestling with in the States in recent years are not altogether remote from those you may be facing here in the United Kingdom.

I've always had the impression that things are a little better theologically here in the UK than in the USA—but not by much. We in the States, especially in the Presbyterian Church, trace our spiritual ancestry back to the Church of Scotland and we tend to think of it very highly. Yet as I have listened to some of you, I wonder if in certain areas the church in Britain is actually worse than in the States. My conclusion therefore is that I think there is room for us to learn from one another. However, if I say things that

don't pertain at all to the UK situation, then dismiss them.

Engaging liberal culture

After I completed my theological training, I worked for *Christianity Today* magazine for about a year and a half—it was a very good way for getting up on what was going on in America in the sixties. There had been many rapid changes at that time and when I came back in 1966 from my doctoral studies in Basle, I found a different church situation to the one I left behind when I went to Switzerland. In some ways it was a good period for evangelicals. *Christianity Today* was an attempt by evangelicals to engage liberal theological culture in an intelligent, forthright way. Carl Henry was the founding editor of the magazine. Evangelical churches were growing. There was a new engagement with social issues, for one of the criticisms that had rightly been raised against evangelicals in the previous decades was they had tended to withdraw into their own academic ghettos.

The sixties were also a time of

decline for the liberal churches. I tried to figure out what was wrong with the liberal church of which I was then a part. It was not that *Christianity Today* was shooting from the side at our denomination in a critical way. We were part of it and were trying to engage with what the difficulties really were. However, I began to realise that here was a Christian denomination attempting to do Christian work essentially in a worldly way. It seemed to me the church was becoming increasingly secular.

In my own thinking I broke it down like this: ours was a church that was pursuing the world's wisdom, embracing the world's theology, following the world's agenda and employing the world's methods. What do I mean?

The world's wisdom

When we talk about the world's wisdom, we first contrast that with what has always been the wisdom of the church. Christian people down the ages have stood before the Bible and have confessed their own lack of

wisdom in spiritual things. We are taught in 1 Corinthians 2 that the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness to him. They have to be spiritually discerned. We have no wisdom at all unless we are taught by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

But the liberal church seemed to have abandoned that. It was the result partly of higher criticism, and partly of secularism. The liberal church was more or less trusting its own wisdom rather than the wisdom of the scriptures. One of the results was the church hardly knew what it could believe and so it began to lose members. People are not attracted to a church which neither knows what it believes nor where it stands. That decline still continues.

Further, there was a great tendency to trust merely the political processes of the church. I mean when there was an issue to be discussed, proposals would be made, debate entered into and, if, when the vote was taken, 51% favoured a particular motion, it would be passed and those who are in charge would say the Holy Spirit had spoken. My impression was that the Holy Spirit often had very little to do with that process. That was the world's wisdom.

The world's theology

From that also came the world's theology. In church circles, of course, you don't abandon the theological terminology. So we still heard about sin, faith, salvation, evangelism and Jesus Christ. But these terms had a different meaning to their meaning in an earlier generation. Sin was no longer a transgression of the law of God. Sin had become problems inherent in the social structures. In other words sin was now remote from us, and was something 'out there'.

The solution to sin and the gospel of salvation actually became a social revolution. Faith was redefined as perceiving the situation and then doing something about it. While the same terminology was kept, it began to have quite a different meaning.

The world's agenda

As far as the world's agenda was concerned, that is hardly a mystery because the ecumenical movement was particularly strong in the sixties. It has since slowed down, but at that time one of the slogans of the ecumenical movement was, 'The world sets the agenda'. That meant whatever the world was particularly concerned about ought to be the primary concern of the church. Forget evangelism, Christian growth and sanctification. The world just now is concerned about *racism* – that's what the church should throw its efforts behind. If the world is concerned about *ecology* we ought to be concerned about ecology or whatever the current issue might be.

The world's methods

The world's methods were concerned with how one achieved a revolution in attitudes to racism and other current issues. Essentially we had now no longer a genuine trust in the work of a supernatural and sovereign God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Rather we had a trust in the use of material and political resources—raising money, using political pressure to change laws and so on. Therefore money, property and numbers became dominant concerns in the church.

At the time I saw a cartoon in one of our magazines, *The New Yorker*. It's a secular magazine but contains some of the best cartoons you'll see. One showed two puritan pilgrims crossing over the Atlantic (presumably

on the Mayflower); they were standing at the ship's railings discussing their future. One was saying: 'My short-range goal is religious freedom but my long-range goal is to go into real estate'. Some of our mainline denominations have become little more than real-estate holding organisations.

Evangelical churches today

It has struck me like a thunderbolt in recent years that everything I'm saying about liberal churches thirty years ago or so, is now true of evangelical churches. It happens in different ways, of course. The issues are different today. But when I think about it under

the solution to sin became a social revolution

the four categories I have outlined, what do we find? Evangelicals have become heretics at this point!

Take an example. Ask evangelicals about the Bible. If you use the right terminology you'll get the right answers. 'Is the Bible the word of God?' 'Yes.' 'Is the Bible inspired?' 'Yes' 'Is the Bible authoritative?' 'Yes' Evangelicals will tell you, 'Of course the Bible is the Word of God and the Word of God doesn't lie.'

However, if you ask, 'Is the evangelical church—the various denominations and independent fellowships together under that amorphous umbrella—actually being guided by the scriptures today?' the answer is probably no. Because evangelicals who give lip service to the

authority of Scripture really are increasingly guided by the spirit of the age.

Scripture sidelined

The issue today is not the *inerrancy* of Scripture. The issue today is the *sufficiency* of scripture. Does scripture really provide us with what we need or do we have to find another way out of our problems? What is happening is that the scriptures are being sidelined. The world's wisdom is taking over.

As far as the world's theology is concerned, though the terminology is different, the same has happened. It's not the old liberal reformulation of

the scriptures are being sidelined, the world's wisdom is taking over

theology so that sin becomes oppression and evangelism becomes liberation. Rather sin in evangelical culture today is essentially 'dysfunction' whose solution is psychiatry or therapy and Jesus becomes an example of the 'wholeness of life' but not a Saviour from sin.

Enough money to enjoy life

What about the world's agenda? (I must say that at this point I think the agenda of the liberal church was better than the evangelical agenda—at least in so far as it was concerned about other people and genuine social problems.) Evangelicals today appear to be captured by the spirit of the age in that the world's basic desire is for personal peace and happiness and,

as Francis Schaeffer used to say, 'Enough money to enjoy life'. Listen to the preaching of evangelical ministers and that is what you hear. If you have problems then Jesus is there to solve them; or, you can have a happy life, function well and go on to make money. There is very little concern for the true gospel, evangelism or missions.

Political lobbying

Is the world's methodology affecting evangelicals too? Evangelicals have realised they can have a political presence so they began in the seventies to lobby to get changes in our government. One of our concerns has been that moral absolutes have been forced out of law and government. So we have had campaigns, for example, to get the Ten Commandments on to the walls of our law courts. We've had strange cases where the prosecuting lawyer has argued that there has been an unfair trial in a murder case because the Ten Commandments were displayed in the courtroom. One commandment states, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and so the Ten Commandments have had to be removed because the jurors were allegedly being prejudiced. So evangelicals have been lobbying to get the Ten Commandments back in court rooms.

Recently one of our church staff was present at a convention attended by thousands of evangelicals and church leaders. Our man interviewed two hundred and seventy people of whom only one could recite the Ten Commandments. One said, 'I don't know what they are but I keep them.' These were the people lobbying for the commandments to be on the walls of the law courts!

Resurgence of reformed theology

But it's not all bad news. I am

encouraged about the resurgence of reformed theology. There are many who are studying the classic theologians and searching the Scriptures again to find something more than 'evangelical froth'. As a result of that many of the reformed churches are growing.

Some reformed churches are branching out into difficult places. A professor from Westminster Theological Seminary named Tim Kellar went to New York in 1989 and in that time the church he has founded, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, has grown to 2,000 meeting every Sunday to hear sound theological preaching. They meet in Hunter College auditorium on the east side of Central Park in Manhattan. They are now establishing a whole presbytery as they plant branch churches.

About that same time we started a reformed conference called The Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology. We had about three hundred people at the beginning but it has grown and now we can't get everybody into the building so we have it in four different places across the States.

Post-modernism

What we did not foresee ten years ago was the onslaught of post-modernity. We talk about the relativism of our age. In his book *The Closing of the American Mind*, Alan Bloom argues that modernity with its relativism has destroyed higher education. Higher education in the classical sense was always understood as the pursuit of absolutes—ideals such as goodness, truth and beauty. However in our relativistic age, there are no absolutes to be pursued and universities have turned into a trade schools. So students are no longer learning how to think but simply certain skills of modern technology. Under modernity

your standard was your standard and my standard was my standard. But now under post-modernity you can't even have your standard because, it is argued, all you're doing is using your standards to oppress me to keep me under your control! All of this has impacted the churches as well.

Theological illiteracy

Let me tell you what I think has happened to the evangelical churches in terms of their theology. Back in that period of evangelical resurgence, what held the various evangelical churches together theologically was a rather simple doctrinal statement. Usually it was drafted against a background of liberalism and therefore stressed the supernatural. It generally consisted of twelve statements, the first of which would be on scriptural authority. There would statements on the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ, his bodily resurrection and the work of the Holy Spirit. Not much on the church or sacraments since those were divisive issues. Usually a statement would be included on the final judgement and the Lord's return.

For decades that worked pretty well and held evangelicals together so they were not fighting over secondary issues. But looking back, it seems to me the reason it worked well was that evangelicals actually believed much more than their theological statements. My own parents would be an example. They were thoroughly evangelical. But they understood a lot more than was in the credal statement of their church. They trusted in a sovereign God and understood something of the way he works in people's lives.

In my lifetime all of that has evaporated. People now don't have that kind of knowledge of scripture. We have enormous theological illiteracy.

It's true even at the point of those who are entering seminary in order to be trained for the ministry. I asked Prof. David Wells, author of *No Place for Truth, God in the Wasteland*, 'What do you notice in your seminary today as new classes come in?' He said, 'Each class that comes in is more theologically ignorant than the class that came before.' That is the situation. In that kind of an environment the whole thing begins to fall apart with the church drifting and becoming increasingly secular without even realising what is happening.

The Cambridge Declaration

The question is whether can anything be done. In 1994, a number of us met in Philadelphia to address this problem. There were some interesting people there. David Wells, John Armstrong, RC Sproule, Alistair Begg and others. Out of our meeting came an organisation called 'The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals'. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, two years later we drafted a paper called The Cambridge Declaration which has become a banner for the kind of efforts we are making. The question we were addressing was, 'What needs to be rediscovered?'

Sola scriptura

Our answer is that the great emphases of the Protestant Reformation need to be rediscovered. In theological terminology it's the great *solas* of the Reformation—*sola* meant 'only' or 'alone' or 'nothing else besides'. The reformers linked *sola* to their reformation doctrines: *sola scriptura*, 'scripture alone'. The Roman church talked about scripture, but it wasn't scripture alone. Traditions were alongside scripture. It was not that the reformers repudiated all elements of

tradition but it was *sola scriptura* because when scripture and tradition were in conflict the scripture had to prevail, and the traditions had to change. The Reformers called that the 'formal principle' of the Reformation because it gave 'form' to everything else.

Solus Christus, sola gratia, sola fide

There were the doctrines at the very heart of the gospel. *Sola Christe*, through Christ alone, *sola gratia*, by grace alone, *sola fide*, by faith alone—we are saved solely by the work of Christ, not by any human effort. Salvation is not by the merit of the

we have enormous theological illiteracy... even among those for the ministry

saints, it's by Christ alone. Likewise, it's by grace alone because there's nothing in us that could ever require salvation to be given to us from God. When they talked about *sola fide* they wanted to eliminate works entirely. Luther said, 'Justification by faith is the doctrine by which the church stands or falls. If you don't have that you don't have a true church.'

Those three doctrines went together as defensive theologies around the very heart of the gospel, the Reformers calling them the 'material principle' of the reformation because this was the heart of the matter. The scriptures were the 'formal principle' and these other doctrines were the 'material principle'.

Sola Deo gloria

Finally the reformers said, *sola Deo gloria*, to the glory of God alone, because that is the ultimate end of it all—not our personal happiness, or the well-being of the world, or anything else, but the glory of God. They said if we don't have that we don't have true Christianity or a true reformation. This, then, is what we are concerned about today and it seems to me this is what we have to tackle today.

Allowing scripture to slide

The problem in evangelical churches is not a repudiation of Scripture. It's simply that we have allowed scripture

'amazing grace' has become 'boring grace' for many people

to slide. The Cambridge Declaration says:

The church is guided far too often by the culture rather than by scripture. Therapeutic techniques, marketing strategies and the beat of the entertainment world often have far more to say about what the church wants, how it functions and what it offers than does the Word of God. Pastors have neglected their rightful oversight of worship including the doctrinal content of the music. Biblical authority has been abandoned as its truths have faded from Christian consciousness and as its doctrines have lost their saliency the church has been increasingly emptied of its integrity, moral authority and direction.

I think that is exactly what has happened. We no longer trust the Word of God to be the means of the evangelisation of the lost. We no longer seek the doctrines of the scriptures as the basis and means of our growth in grace or sanctification. We don't come to the scriptures in order to find God's will for our lives. We seek instead some kind of mystical revelation and we don't actually trust the power of the Word of God to transform society. *Sola scriptura* is something that is vital and must be recovered in our day.

Solus Christus. Can it really be that evangelical churches have lost sight of Jesus Christ? I think we have. His work on the Cross is pushed to the periphery. Jesus and the Gospels are read as little stories telling us how to live happy, wholesome lives. But that is not biblical teaching. The Cambridge Declaration again:

As evangelical faith has become secularised, its interests have become blurred along with those of the culture. The result is a loss of absolute values, permissive individualism and the substitution of wholeness for holiness, recovery for repentance, intuition for truth, healing for belief, chance for providence, and immediate gratification for enduring hope. Christ and his cross have moved from the centre of our vision.

Sola gratia. What's the problem there? It may be hard to believe but people have become bored with grace. John Newton's 'amazing grace' isn't amazing any more. J.I. Packer has said, 'Amazing grace is boring grace for many people', the reason being that we don't know the doctrines. If we do not understand sin and the absolute freedom of God in matters of salvation, grace isn't grace to us; it becomes

something we deserve and fades out of the picture. For the lack of teaching, we are losing grace.

Sola fide. In some quarters of the evangelical church, we lose faith because it is turned into a work. For the reformers, faith was the opening of the hands to receive what God gives. In Arminian theology, the essential ingredient in salvation is the ability of the individual to choose Christ. But if our faith in him is not understood as being a fruit of the work of the Spirit then it becomes a work. For many people today, faith is indeed something they 'do'.

The meaning of faith

Further, not only do we make too much of faith in that respect, we also minimise it in another sense because we disembowel it of its meaning. Faith in the classical sense has three elements. *Faith had to have content*; you can't have faith unless you know what you are believing. Before the reformation the Church said there was no need to understand. All one had to believe was that the church understood the truth and have implicit faith in what the church did. But Calvin fought that tooth and nail because he said, 'We are not saved by pious ignorance but by grabbing upon the truth'.

The reformers also saw that faith involves *assent or agreement*. It is not enough only to understand the content of the faith. The devils understands it but they do not believe it in the sense of assent to it. Somehow it must break through to us. The Holy Spirit does that because we never come to believe it by ourselves. By ourselves we repudiate it!

The third element in faith is commitment or trust. An illustration I use is courtship and marriage. In the first stage of the courtship the couple

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are getting to know each other. That is the first stage—the content, so to speak. Then they fall in love, that's the equivalent of assent, agreement. But the marriage is when they make the commitment, when they say, 'Yes, I will belong to you until death us do part'.

Do you see what is missing in so much evangelical preaching? Faith becomes mere mental assent to a few doctrinal truths. Because the aim is to get as many people as possible into the church, we do not examine them thoroughly but are content with low standards and cheap grace.

To him be the glory

Who is it who can say today, 'To God

alone be the glory,' as the Reformers did? Not the world for it thinks the way Nebuchadnezzar did when he said exactly the opposite: 'Is not this the great Babylon which I have built by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?' That is exactly the opposite of Romans 11:36: 'For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.' Nebuchadnezzar said, 'My idea, by my power, for my glory'. Whereas Paul says it is all from him, through him, to him, and therefore for *His* glory.

Arminian theology wants to believe in grace. Arminians are Christian people but they can't say 'to God alone be the glory' because they have to hang

on to that little bit of human ability which is the final contributing factor enabling a person to enter into the grace of life. Even some Calvinists cannot say 'to God alone be the glory'. Too many are really chiefly interested in their own little kingdoms. We are more interested in our own ministries and churches, our books and reputation to be concerned solely for the glory of God. We need to bow before God and say 'to God alone be the glory,' then perhaps by the grace of God—and it can only be by the grace of God—we will see the kind of reformation we need. I pray in our time the church will begin to move forward once again.

In Honour of the Spirit

The third article in a series of three

Eugene Peterson

‘Perichoresis’ is a word of which I have become very fond. It’s a Greek word, used by our Christian ancestors to talk about the Trinity. I like the sound of the word, perichoresis—the syllables skip and dance so precisely. But even more I like the image: a folk dance sort of image. Picture a folk dance with units made up of three partners. The music starts and the movement begins, the three partners holding hands and dancing in a circle. Then, on signal, they break away, change partners, reverse directions, rearrange their positions, whirl this partner, then the next, break apart, come together. The tempo picks up, the momentum increases, skipping, turning, reversing, changing partners, splitting apart, coming together—all the time in rhythm with the music and in coordinated relationship with each other. The movements are so swift that it is hard to distinguish one person from another—they blur into one another, yet they are always separate, touching lightly. No person does his or her own

thing, each person in his or her separate movements part of the same dance.

Perichoresis. Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God in three persons, but the persons are only present to us in relationship, and the relationship is dynamic and alive, like the dance.

The persons of the Godhead can never be known in isolation from one another. The godhead is not divided up functionally, each part assigned to one aspect of divinity, the Father going off in one direction to do his work, the Son in another direction to do his, and the Holy Spirit in yet another, with the three coming back together in the evening, comparing notes on what has been accomplished and then preparing an organisational chart for the next day’s work and deciding who will do what. If that is the way we imagine God we will never get it right. God cannot be understood functionally.

God is ‘being-in-personal-relationship’ and can only be understood relationally, or as our ancestors were fond of saying,

perichoretically. God cannot be pinned down for analysis: examining first the Father for attributes and function; then the Son, and then the Spirit. Whenever the Father is at work, the Son and Spirit are present also; whenever the Son is at work, the Father and Spirit are present also; whenever the Spirit is at work, the Father and the Son are present also. And they change positions so swiftly you are never sure who is where and doing what with which partner. ‘Swing your partner, dos y dos...!’

This means of course that we cannot specialise in one or another aspect of the Trinity. Dealing with one person involves the other persons whether you are aware of it or not and whether you like it or not. God cannot be divided against himself. It also means that what we are doing in this series of three articles, writing one article on the Father, one on the Son, and a third on the Spirit, has to be constantly re-contextualized, re-imaged in trinitarian terms.

In the first article, we honoured the

Father by taking life seriously. We are set down in this place that is burgeoning with life—this glorious creation. What does it mean to live on Irish or Scottish, Welsh or English soil, look into Irish or Scottish... faces? Beginning with the birth of Jesus we cultivate an attentive, adoring life in honour of the Father.

In the second article, we saw we honour the Son by taking suffering and death seriously. We are set down in this place that is plagued with suffering and death—this mess of history. Death all around us and we ourselves doomed to die. What does it mean, for example, for Irish readers to be caught

*they showed up on time
for worship each Sunday
but they yawned*

up in Irish history and the past thirty years of the 'Troubles'? Beginning with the kerygmatic death of Jesus we cultivate a sacrificial life in honour of the Son.

Now we consider how we honour the Spirit by taking ourselves seriously. We realise that there is more to us than biology and history, our genetic code and family tree. We have both the desire and capacity to get in on what God is doing—we find ourselves believing and praying. What does it mean to find ourselves believing and praying in a world in which God lives and dies in Jesus Christ? Beginning with the kerygmatic resurrection of Jesus we cultivate a life of obedient love in honour of the Spirit.

Honouring the Spirit

Exploring the Neighbourhood of the Soul

One of the irrepressible features of this life of ours is that we want to be in on whatever is going on. We are not content to be spectators—we want to help, participate in this creation, in this history. In some way or other I sense in my bones that I am part of all of this, and I want to get in on it.

As an adolescent, one of the visions that filled my head with flash and colour and glory was the French Revolution. I actually knew very little about it. Some vague impressions, incidents and names, were mixed haphazardly in my mind to produce a drama of pure romance, excitement, and the triumph of righteousness. These were people who had entered history—were in on the action, which was what I was itching to do myself. If I had had access then to my present vocabulary I would have probably used the word 'holy' to sum it up: something spiritual, blazing and extravagant and glorious.

I had this picture of idealistic, devoted men and women with the ringing affirmations of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity on their lips, marching through a corrupt, sinful world and purging it with their righteous ideas and action. Names like Marat, Robespierre, and Danton had a ringing and righteous sound in my ears. Evil dungeons in the Bastille were deep shadows against which the fires of liberation burned purely. Heroism and villainy were in apocalyptic conflict. The guillotine was an instrument of the Last Judgement separating the sheep from the goats.

Thus my imagination, untroubled by

facts, spun a wonderful fantasy of the glorious French Revolution.

When I arrived at college and looked through a catalogue of courses, I was delighted to find listed a course in the French Revolution. I had to wait a year to take it, since first year students were not admitted, but that only served to heighten my appetite. And so, returning for my second year, my first move was to enrol in the course.

The class was one of the significant disappointments of my college years. I brought the kind of great expectations to it that adolescents often do to adult enterprises, but nothing of what I expected took place. The professor was a slight, elderly woman with thin, wispy grey hair. She dressed in dark, shapeless silks, and spoke in a soft, timorous monotone. She was a wonderfully nice person and was academically well qualified in her field of European history. But as a teacher of the French Revolution, she was a disaster. She knew everything about the French but nothing about revolution.

I, meanwhile, knew practically nothing about the subject and the few facts I had in my position were nearly all of them wrong. What I possessed, in fact, was a vast ignorance about the whole business. But I was right about one thing: it was a revolution. Revolutions turn things inside out and upside down. Revolutions are titanic struggles between antagonistic wills. Revolutions excite the desire for a better life of freedom, promise a better life of freedom. Sometimes they make good on their promises and set people free. More often they don't. But after a revolution nothing is quite the same again.

Sitting in her classroom, though, day after day no one would ever know that. Ill-fated Marat, murderous Charlotte Corday, the black Bastille, the bloody

guillotine, venal and opportunistic Danton, giddy Marie Antoinette, ox-like Louis XVI—all the players and props in that colourful and violent age were presented in the same platitudinous, tired, and pious voice. Everybody sounded the same in her lectures. They were all presented as neatly labelled specimens, like butterflies on a mounting board on which a decade or so of dust had settled. For a long time after that the French Revolution seemed to me a very great bore. Say the words ‘French Revolution’ and I yawned.

A few years later I had become a pastor and was astonished to find men and women in my congregation yawning. Matt Ericson went to sleep every Sunday; he always made it through the first hymn but ten minutes later he was sound asleep. Red Belton, an angry teenager, sat on the back pew out of sight of his parents and read comic books. Karl Strothheim, a bass in the choir, passed notes supplemented by whispers to Luther Olsen on stock market tips. One woman gave me hope—she brought a stenographic notebook with her every Sunday and wrote down in shorthand everything I said. At least one person was paying attention. Then I learned that she was getting ready to leave her husband and was using the hour or worship to practice her shorthand so she could get a self-supporting job.

These were, most of them, good people, nice people. They were familiar with the Christian faith, knew the Christian stories, showed up on time for worship each Sunday. But they yawned. How could they do that? How could anyone go to sleep ten minutes after singing ‘Blessing and Honour and Glory and Power...’? How could anyone sustain interest in Batman when St Paul’s *Romans* was being read?

How could anyone be content to practice shorthand when the resurrected Christ was present in Word and Sacrament? I had, it seemed, a whole congregation of saints and sinners who knew everything about the Christian life except that it was *holy*, a holy resurrection life. They knew the word ‘Christian’ pretty well, and identified themselves as Christians. But *holy*?—resurrection life in which they were involved from head to toe?

I knew I had my work cut out for me. When I was ordained and called to be their pastor, I had supposed that my task was to teach and preach the truth of the scriptures so that they would know God and how he works their salvation. I had supposed that my task was to help them make moral decisions so that they could live happily ever after with a clear conscience. I had supposed that my task was to pray with and for them, gathering them in the presence of a holy God who made heaven and earth and sent Jesus to die for their sins. Now I realised that more than accurate learning was at stake, more than moral behaviour was at stake, more than getting them on their knees on a Sunday morning was at stake. *Life* was at stake—their lives, their *spirits—and the Holy Spirit*. People can think correctly and behave rightly and worship politely and still live badly—live anemically; lived bored and insipid and trivial lives.

After a good bit of casting around, I found the place to begin was with the resurrection of Jesus.

The Kerygma of the Soul

The Resurrection of Jesus

The Gospel, while honouring our experience, doesn’t begin with our

experience. We don’t begin a holy life by wanting a holy life, desiring to be good, fulfilled, complete, included in the grand scheme of things. We have been anticipated, and the way we have been anticipated is by resurrection, Jesus’ resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus establishes the entire Christian life in the action of God by the Holy Spirit. The Christian life begins in the place of impossibility, the tomb. Just as Jesus’ birth launches us into the Creation and Jesus’ death launches us into Salvation, Jesus’ resurrection launches us into Holy Living. Jesus resurrection is the kerygmatic pivot for Holy Living.

as a teacher of the French Revolution, she was a disaster

Continuing to use St John’s Gospel as our working context, the text that holds this in focus is this: ‘...[Jesus] breathed on them (his assembled disciples) and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit”. You will remember that a few days before, on the evening before his crucifixion, Jesus had that extended conversation with his disciples that prepared them for his death and resurrection. Throughout that conversation he promised them over and over with variations that when he was gone physically he would be present in the Spirit (Jn.14:15-17, 25-26; 15:26; 16:7-11, 13-14). Now he is making good on that promise: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’. He is replacing himself with himself.

Resurrection is the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus, raising him from the dead and presenting him before the disciples; resurrection is also the work of the Holy Spirit in those of us who believe in and follow Jesus.

I have used the word 'kerygmatic' to identify those pivotal moments in the life of Jesus that so clearly reveal God to us and for us: birth, death, and resurrection. Kerygmatic, because it is an announcement, a proclamation of something that has happened quite apart from us, but that defines the reality in which we live. And defines it in such a way that we realise that it is wonderfully good—actually, a

too often we... melt the resurrection accounts down into an ingot of doctrine

redefinition of life so that we no longer see ourselves as reduced to ourselves, having to take charge of ourselves and everyone around us, to make something of ourselves as we are so often told. Nor do we any longer understand ourselves as having to put up with everything that comes to us and make the best of it.

No, each of these moments is a proclamation: *this*—this birth of Jesus, this death of Jesus, this resurrection of Jesus—is something we cannot do for ourselves, cannot take credit for, cannot take over and run, cannot reproduce in any way. It is done for us. We can only hear and believe and enter this God-for-us reality that is so generously given as both the context

and the content of our lives.

Right now I want to anchor our lives, the way we live our lives, the impulses and desires we have to get in on what God is doing in the wonders of creation and in the mess of history, in resurrection. There is no living worth its salt that is not the consequence of the action of God in Jesus through the Holy Spirit: 'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through the Spirit which dwells in you' (Rom 8:11). Paul is tireless in his variations on this theme. This is the kind of living that we designate holy living. A resurrection life. I lost interest in revolution a long time ago—I'm interested now in *resurrection*.

There are symmetries in the birth/death/resurrection stories but there is also this difference: we experience birth and death, at least biologically, in what appear to us as natural conditions; but the resurrection is supernatural. Jesus did not raise himself, he was raised.

It is critical that we get inside this and make it our own, that we realise not just that the resurrection happened, but that it happens. Too often we make the resurrection a matter of apologetics and melt the resurrection accounts down into an ingot of doctrine. For Jesus (and Paul interpreting Jesus) it is primarily a matter for holy living: receive the Holy Spirit—receive this Holy Spirit by whom Jesus has just been raised from the dead, so that you can continue this resurrection life in your prayers and obedience.

It happens, we do not make it happen. The more we get involved in what God is doing, the less we do; the more we participate in God's work as revealed in Jesus, the more is done to

us, the more is done through us. The more we practice resurrection the less we are on our own or by ourselves—for we find that this resurrection that is so intensely and relationally personal in Father, Son, and Spirit, at the same time plunges us into relationships with brothers and sisters we never knew we had; we are in community.

Dishonouring the Spirit

Sectarianism

Community. We are not ourselves by ourselves. We are born into communities, we live in communities, we die in communities. Human beings are not solitary, self-sufficient creatures.

When Jesus said 'Receive the Holy Spirit', he said it to the assembled community. When Luke describes the descent of the Holy Spirit it is upon the one hundred and twenty praying and waiting followers of Jesus Christ 'together in one place'.

And yet, something odd keeps intruding into these communities. It is so glaringly out of place in the context of the biblical revelation that one would think that it would be noticed immediately and banned absolutely. More frequently it is welcomed and embellished. I am talking about individualism. Men and women who have just been de-centred, defunctionalized suddenly become obsessed with these wonderfully saved souls that they know themselves to be and begin cultivating their own spiritualities. Self-spirituality has become the hallmark of our age. The spirituality of ME. A spirituality of self-centring, self-sufficiency, and self-development. All over the world at the present time we have people who have

found themselves re-defined by the revelation of God in Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, going off and cultivating the Divine Within and abandoning spouses, children, friends, and congregations.

This is not merely odd; it is outrageous. For one thing, it makes hash of our inclusion in Jesus prayer for his about-to-be-scattered friends that 'they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us... that they may become completely one' (Jn.17:21,23). For another, it removes Jesus' primary and insistently repeated love command from its controlling and dominating place in our lives. None of us, of course, would think of eliminating the love command, but we place it on the margins and so relativise it—we pick the people and places and occasions in which we will practice it.

But holy living, resurrection living, is not a self-project. We are a *people* of God and cannot live holy lives, resurrection lives, as individuals. The love that God pours out for and in us creates a community in which that love is reproduced in our love for one another. We are a community, a people of God.

One of the common ways in which we avoid the appearance of crass individualism is through sectarianism: we gather with other people in the name of Jesus, but we pre-define them according to our own tastes and predispositions. But this is just a cover for our individualism: we reduce the community to conditions congenial to the imperial self. The sectarian impulse is strong in all branches of the church because it provides such a convenient appearance of community without the difficulties of loving people we don't approve of. We can gather in prayer without letting Jesus pray us into

relationship with the very men and women we've invested a good bit of time avoiding. We construct religious clubs instead of entering resurrection communities. Sects are termites in the Father's House.

Cultivating the Honour of God the Spirit

This is a most attractive life, this resurrection life. The birth and death of Jesus come together in an amazing and personal way in Jesus' resurrection. And now we find that our lives, our birth and death, come together in resurrection: Jesus resurrection becomes our resurrection. We read Paul's words, 'If you be raised with Christ...' (Col.3:1), and say, 'If?' no, 'Since...' He made us 'alive together with Christ' (Eph.2:5). '... it is Christ who lives in me' (Gal.2:20). The resurrection stories of our four evangelists are now fused by Paul into the language of personal participation. The Christian life is a Jesus-resurrection life, a life that is accomplished by the Spirit.

The major and persistent difficulty in cultivating a life that honours the Spirit, this Spirit who raises us up with Jesus, is that we want to take over. We have this wonderful gift of new life, and now we move in and start giving orders to the Spirit on how we think it should be conducted. So how do we stay involved without getting in the way? Two imperatives chart the way. Neither is difficult to understand, but it takes a lifetime of attention and discipline to be shaped by them. The words are 'Repent' and 'Follow'.

'Repent' is the No and 'Follow' the Yes of the Christian life. The two words have to be worked out in changing conditions and various conditions

through the life of the church and in each of our lives. We never master either command to the extent that we graduate and go to higher things. These are basic and remain basic.

Repent. Repent is an action word: change direction. You are going the wrong way, thinking the wrong thoughts, imagining everything backwards. The first thing we do to honour the Spirit is to reverse whatever we are doing. Regardless of what it is, it is almost sure to be wrong, no matter how hard we are trying, no matter how well ill-intentioned. We think we are in charge, that we are the measure of all things, that Everything depends on

a redefinition of life so that we no longer see ourselves as reduced to ourselves

us. We are travelling a broad road paved with good intentions, a doctrinal orthodoxy expertly engineered with the latest technologies to get us to where we want to go with the least inconvenience, efficiently and quickly. It is a heavily trafficked road, noisy and polluted, with many accidents and fatalities. But it gets us where we want to go so we put up with almost anything to get there.

And then the gospel word comes: Repent! Turn around. Change your way of thinking, your way of imagining. You are on the right track but you are going in the wrong direction. Leave the noise, the pollution, the clutter, the depersonalising efficiency, the technology-enabled hurry. Just say a

loud, authoritative, non-negotiable 'No'. We are on holy ground and we need to protect it from profane stomping and trampling.

We cultivate the resurrection life not by adding something to our lives but by leaving the frenetic ego life, clearing out the cultural and religious clutter, turning our backs on what we commonly summarise as 'the world, the flesh, and the devil'. Our churches are too busy and our schedules are too busy.

And then Follow. Follow Jesus. Following Jesus is the Yes that follows the No. We have renounced initiative and embraced obedience. We have

physical—a following, for Jesus is going someplace: he is going to Jerusalem, and he is going to the Father. We follow Jesus, cultivating a life of prayer in Jesus name, finding that the Spirit is praying in us and through us to the Father, and before we know it we find ourselves doing the work of Jesus in mission and evangelism. We are in the world of the Trinity where all is attention and adoration, sacrifice and hospitality (communion), obedience and love.

In virtually all of our Christian traditions, Holy Baptism is the defining first word in the resurrection life, setting our unique and personal—Christian!—name in the name of the Trinity. Jesus' baptism at the Jordan was marked by the descent of the Spirit on and into him at which time he began his public ministry of proclaiming the kingdom of God. The baptism of the first community of Christians in Jerusalem was marked by the descent of the Holy Spirit among

them at which time they began to speak the language and do the work of God's kingdom in the world. Because we do not baptise ourselves—it is always something done to us by God in the community—the resurrection life is accepted as previous to and outside ourselves, which then enters into and becomes our true selves. And it is always done with the assent, participation, and affirmation of the community of faithful, worshipping Christians. Holy Baptism is at one and the same time naming, repentance, death, resurrection, and following Jesus in the name of the Trinity.

Holy Baptism defines the terms in which we cultivate honour of the Spirit: a turning away from ourselves and a following of Jesus Christ in the name of the Trinity. A beginning, which requires re-enactment every day of our lives. For we cannot be trusted to do anything on our own in this business. As Barth insisted so strenuously, we are always beginners with God.

a spirituality of self-centring, self-sufficiency, and self development

renounced clamouring self-assertions and embraced quiet listening. We watch the Lord Jesus work, we listen to him speak, we accompany him into new relationships, odd places and odd people. Keeping company with Jesus, observing what he does and listening to what he says, develops into a life of answering God, a life of responding to God, which is a life of prayer. For following Jesus Christ is not a robotic, lock-step marching in a straight line after him. The following gets inside us, becomes internalised, gets into our muscles and nerves; it becomes prayer. Prayer is what develops in us after we step out of the centre and begin responding to the centre, to Christ Jesus. And that response is always

Follow Those Who Follow Christ

A Sermon Preached by Robert Murray McCheyne

St Peter's, 1840

And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Ruth 1:16

In these two women of Moab you see the difference between nature and grace.

1. Orpah appears to have been of a most gentle, affectionate disposition. She had been a kind and loving wife for ten years to her now buried husband. She had been a kind daughter-in-law to Naomi: 'The Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me' (v.8). She could not bear to part with Naomi. She first determined to go with her (v.6). When Naomi bade them go back, she said: 'Surely we will go with thee.' When Naomi again bade them return, she lifted up her voice and wept. And she kissed her mother-in-law most affectionately, and went back to her people and her gods. Oh, how much of loveliness there is in the gentle affections of nature! Who

would believe that they cover a heart as black as hell?

2. Ruth also appears to have been of a kindly, gentle disposition; but her heart was also touched by the Spirit of God. Naomi had not only been her mother-in-law, but the mother of her soul. She had taught her the way of salvation by the blood of the Lamb; and therefore, when the day of trial came, that she must part from her people and her gods, or part from her spiritual instructor, Ruth clave to Naomi: 'And Naomi said, "Behold thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law." And Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go: and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God"'

(vv.15,16).

From these words I draw the following lesson: *That we should cleave to our converted friends.*

When God sent me away from you, about eighteen months ago,¹ I think I could then number in my own mind more than sixty souls who, I trust, had visibly passed from death unto life during the time I had been among you. Now, I do think I could number many more, aye, twice as many more, of you who have come, by the wonderful grace of God, to choose Israel for your people, and Israel's God for your God. I trust that there is hardly a family in this church who have not some friend or relative really born again. Oh, that God would this day put Ruth's resolution into your heart—to cleave to your converted friends, and to say: 'Where thou goest, I will go. Thy

people shall be my people, and thy God my God!’

I. Their God is a precious God

1. A sin-pardoning God: ‘Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity?’ Unconverted souls have no God: ‘Without God, and without hope in the world.’ Or, like Orpah, they have false gods. Whatever they like best is their god. Their belly is their god—money is their god—or the god of this world is their god. But, ah! such gods are not

*sin makes the world groan...
damned souls shriek...
hell blaze*

sin-pardoning. Your converted friends have found a sin-pardoning God—one that washes out their sins in blood, though red as scarlet—the God and Father of Jesus—one that forgets sins: ‘I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins’. ‘Thou hast put all my sins behind thy back.’ A God that is the prodigal’s Father: ‘When he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him.’ Should you not cleave to them? They had the same sins as you—perhaps they have sinned along with you. Why should you despair, if they have found mercy? Cleave to the skirt of their garment; for God is with them.

2. Their God is a faithful God, faithful to them in enabling them to persevere: ‘I will never leave thee, nor

forsake thee’, ‘He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.’ ‘Even to old age I am he’ (Is. 46:4). When once he takes a brand out of the fire, he never lets it fall in again. He will let heaven and earth fall sooner than one of his own. He keeps them night and day. The souls whom God chose four years ago² in this place, he has kept to this day. Often they have been ready to die: ‘Then the Lord sent from above; he took me, he drew me out of many waters,’ ‘When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them: I the God of Israel will not forsake them.’

He is also faithful in temptations: ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.’ Look back, believers, on your temptations. They have been very dreadful. You have been on the brink of ruin. The Lord has delivered you.

He is also faithful in afflictions: ‘When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.’ Do you not see they have a refuge in the storm? Believers in this place have passed through many sore trials within these four years; yet God has been their refuge. He is a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress. Do you not see in the hour of trial what a rest they found in God—in the Saviour?—how they poured out their sorrows into the ear of their High Priest? Cleave you to them.

II. Their people are a happy people

Naomi was one of the peculiar people of Israel. It was this people that Ruth

was going to join. But converted persons amongst us have joined the true Israel—a still more peculiar people. They have been added to the Church—such as have been saved.

1. They are a pardoned people: ‘Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven.’ They have all this blessedness. Sin is the greatest curse and burden in this world. Sin makes the world groan, makes damned souls shriek, and makes hell blaze. But this people have no unpardoned sin lying upon them. They are washed whiter than snow. They are all fair—without so much as a spot on them. They are as clean in God’s pure eye as Christ is. Christ carried all their sins—they carry all his righteousness. Christ has suffered all their hell. They are in the love of God. God delights in them. Are they not a happy people? Are they not happier than you, who have so much sin as would sink a world?

2. A holy people—all born again—all have received the Holy Spirit. He dwells in them, and will never leave them. They have an old heart; still the Spirit reigns in them. They walk after the Spirit—they love in the Spirit—they pray in the Holy Ghost. Of themselves they cannot pray; but the Spirit teaches them. Heaven is begun in their hearts. They have a little of heaven now. Do you not see that they have left off your carnal pleasures? ‘I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.’ Do you see no difference in their tempers—habits—lives? Are they not calmer, happier, heavenlier, than they were before? Seek what they have found.

3. All things work together for their good. Perhaps you will say they are an afflicted people. Some in poverty—some bereaved—some groaning on sick-beds. True, God dealeth with them as with sons. Often they cry, These things are against me. But really all is *for* them. If

we could see the end as God does, we would see that every event is *for* the believer. When we get to the haven, we will see that every wind was wafting us to glory.

4. In death. Even wicked Balaam said: 'Let me die the death of the righteous.' 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.' God calls upon you to mark the death-bed of his children. Sometimes it is triumphant, like Stephen: 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'—almost always peaceful—or, if it be that the sun goes down in a cloud, Oh how sweet the surprise, when the believer finds himself on the other side of Jordan!— at the pearly gate of the New Jerusalem!— in the arms of the angels!— in the smile of Jesus! 'There is a rest remaining for the people of God.' Will you not cleave to your godly child—parent—brother—sister—friend? You have sported together, you have sinned together—will you not be blessed together? 'Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.'

III. They want you to go with them

It is plain that Naomi wanted Ruth to go with her; only she wanted her to go not out of mere natural affection, but out of love to Israel's God. Moses wanted Hobab, his brother-in-law, to go with him. Moses knew the value of the soul: 'We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.' Jeremiah wanted the Jews of his day to go with him: 'Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye

look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride' (Jer.13:16f).

Your converted friends want you to go with them. They may not have boldness to tell you so. It is easier to speak to a stranger than to a friend. Do you not see their anxiety in their eyes? Do you not see how anxious they are that you would come to the house of prayer? They pray for you in secret. Often when you are sleeping they are praying for you. They weep for you 'in secret places, for your pride'. Well, if you will not go, you will be left behind. Still weep and pray, dear friends. This earth would be too like heaven if all we love were saved. Oh, what a sad company will be left!

IV. If you do not go, there will be an eternal separation between you

When Orpah turned back from Naomi and Ruth, she little knew she was parting for ever. They had lived together perhaps from infancy. They had played around the same palm tree—sat before the same cottage door—wandered over the same hills of Moab; now, they parted for eternity. So it is amongst us. There are, no doubt, many of us about to be separated for eternity. How strange, that two trees should grow so near—one to flower in paradise, the other to be a firebrand in hell!

Dear friends, do you not see some whom you love much really converted and saved? Do you not see they have a peace that passeth understanding, while you are still loaded with guilt? They are growing holier—more fond of prayer—walking more humbly—getting riper for glory; you riper for hell—your

sins getting faster hold. Oh, this separation will be for eternity! You may love them much, but you will go back to your gods.

1. You will be separated at death; they will pass into glory, into perfect day—you will lift up your eyes in hell. Besides all this,

2. You will be separated at judgment. When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, he shall separate the sheep from the goats; those on the right hand shall be solemnly acquitted—rewarded for all the good works you now see them daily performing. All their prayers and tears for you will then be recompensed. You, on the left hand,

unconverted souls have no God

shall go away into everlasting punishment. You shall look on that Saviour whom you now despise, and 'wail because of him'. When your eye catches your godly friends, how you will weep and wail! You will then remember all their love, and all your madness.

Parents, do you love your converted children? Can you bear to be parted eternally? Will you cleave to Naomi, or go back to your people and your gods? How will you bear to see the fruit of your body on the throne with Christ, and yourself a brand in an eternal hell?

Endnotes

- 1 McCheyne had been in Palestine on his mission to the Jews. *Ed.*
- 2 It was four years since McCheyne had become minister of St Peter's, Dundee. *Ed.*

Train the Child

The Place of God and His Word in the Home

The third in a series of articles taken from a book originally written in 1956 by Annie Torrance

Through Moses God spoke and said, 'These words shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them in the way, when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest in the way, and when thou liest down and when thou riseth up.' In still later times, the Psalmist said, 'Things which we have heard and known, we will not hide from our children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength and his wonderful works that he has done, for he established a testimony, and appointed a law, which he commanded our fathers that they should make known to their children that the generation to come might know, even the children which should be born, who should rise and declare them to their children that they might set their hope in God.'

Children are open to God

Here then is the parents' obligation to their children, assured of the Lord's continual presence with them. Not only are we not to 'hide' from them what our Lord has made known to us but we are to teach them 'diligently'. How thoroughly do the Holy

Scriptures instruct parents, and how detailed is the instruction given – to 'talk' of God's Word when sitting in our house, or when walking in the way, lying down and rising up, night and day. It could hardly be more specific, but do we do it? It is rather odd that although parents know and can see how quickly children grow and develop in mind and sense as well as in body, and how quickly they come to discern the everyday things of life, yet in the matter of the Christian faith, any such teaching is largely omitted, because, 'the child is too young' and 'later will be soon enough'. But that surely is not what God expects from us. The mind of the child is naturally more receptive and open to God than that of most adults. As a rule children will accept the fact of God quite simply if led that way right from the first.

One cannot but feel that this omission on the part of the parents, or perhaps it may be reluctance, arises from the fact that the Christian faith to them is a religion only and something apart from everyday life. It must be kept in a compartment of its own for special occasions. I have seen it treated in that way, and as the children grew older small doses of this

religion were, as it were, doled out, like a dose of castor oil! Is it to be wondered at that when the children are old enough they will have nothing to do with the religion of such parents, to the latter's dismay?

But the Christian faith is quite different from a cold form of professed religion. Our faith is to be as natural as our physical life. We are to talk about it in all places and circumstances, to mingle it with all we do and plan. God surely means us who are parents to make the knowledge of him and his Word natural in every way, and to apply it to our daily affairs so that the young child becomes familiar with God's way of life at a very early age. We can talk about the characters in the Bible and discuss why some succeeded and some failed, how they came to go astray, and why God was displeased, and on the other hand how the heart of God rejoices when he finds those after his own heart.

A child's best Friend

The important thing is that we bring God into the atmosphere of the home, to share all our joys as well as our tears. The aim should be to win our children for God by helping them to realise and

Mrs Annie Torrance, mother of the Very Revd Prof. T.F. Torrance, the Revd Prof. James Torrance, and the Revd David Torrance, must have been a most remarkable woman. Wife of a CIM missionary, she stayed in Scotland to bring up her three sons and three daughters while her husband returned to China to complete the work he and his wife had earlier begun—surely an immense sacrifice for both parents. The success of Annie Torrance’s method of training her children may be seen in the remarkable record now evident into the third generation of the wider Torrance family which continues to enrich the Church with outstanding service. We are immensely grateful to Prof. T. F. Torrance and the family for permission to publish a series of extracts from the book their mother wrote.

feel he is with them and knows all their interests as he also desires them to know him and share their life with him. We need to make children feel perfectly at home with him and never allow them to regard God in an austere way.

We are to teach our children that our Heavenly Father is One who loves them above all else, who knows them and understands them above all others. That he is their best Friend to whom they can go with everything, and that there is no need to hide anything from him, for he loves to hear everything and also to hear them say, when they have been naughty, how it came about and how sorry they are. It is this helping of a child to be perfectly frank with God in his young years that will help him all through his life.

Should we not then provide our children with such a sure Companion who never forsakes them, a Guide who will never mislead them, a Friend who will never fail them, and a Comforter who will be with them at all times, in all places, in sunshine and storm, even to their old age? How lovely it is when a young child accepts God as part of his daily life, and when he walks and talks, goes to bed and gets up. Children soon make habits and they will soon

acquire the habit of counting on God if they are taught aright.

Forming the habit of prayer

But some may ask, ‘How can this come about?’ Much depends on the parents’ personal attitude – the firm resolve of love and faith, as soon as the child is born and indeed before, to bring up the child in the conscious love of God who gave them the child for this end. Continual prayer is a necessity and will help to focus the attention continually in the right ways. We have to lift up our hearts without ceasing for our children. We can pray over them as they lie in their cots, and form the habit of prayer as we put them to bed and on various other occasions. As this is done constantly the child will become aware of it and the Holy Spirit will interpret and convey the sense of the Presence of God to him.

We so often forget that our God is more anxious and concerned for the spiritual welfare of our children than we can ever be, and also that the Holy Spirit is unceasingly at work as we try to do our part. We may imagine that it all rests with us, but the Power of God is at work alongside of us and it is a case of our working together with him.

This natural atmosphere of God in the home can be greatly hindered by the disunity of the parents in spiritual things. It is not unusual to find that while both parents may truly believe and love the Lord, attend Church and engage in devotional meetings, they cannot talk freely to each other about the Word of God, neither can they kneel in prayer together when alone. Prayer together does wonders. It changes things. Few things are more desirable than to see husband and wife on their knees before the Lord. They will rise up different, and there will be a bond of union between them through which the Holy Spirit can work effectively.

Unity in the home

Another hindrance to the right atmosphere in the home is the lack of definite assurance of salvation in the faith of one or both parents, misgivings about the Word of God and the lack of a personal knowledge of God. In these hurried days so many people seem just to drift along, professing to be Christians, going to Church and religious meetings and perhaps taking part in church activities, and yet have never faced up to the definite and

direct challenge of the Lord to them personally. Every soul needs to be sure of its anchorage, and where this is uncertain the home is liable to be unstable and it will have its reaction on the children. We cannot lead our children where we have never been ourselves. We cannot give them what we have never had ourselves. We cannot help them to build upon the Rock if we are not sure that we are resting on it ourselves.

Whatever the reasons or hindrances that make for disunity in the home, a united effort must be made to overcome them, so that the children may be given every opportunity to

the child is naturally more receptive to God than most adults

know God, and so that prayer for them should not be hindered. It is very plainly pointed out in the Holy Scriptures that God expects much from the home. It is the cradle for heaven, where the Word of God is freely discussed, where parents and children bow before God declaring their allegiance to him as well as committing all things into his hands and asking for the daily supply for every need. It is sad to see how few homes maintain the habit of 'saying grace' before meals, at all times. It is a wonderful opportunity for the parents to foster the spirit of gratitude in the hearts of their children. In giving thanks for the material bread we can lead our children to seek and give thanks for the heavenly

Bread without which they cannot grow and be sustained.

Filling the mind

One of the most delightful ways of training the mind is of telling our children stories or of reading to them. Through this means the mind can be directed into right channels of thought, right ambitions, and a right estimate of things. The stories of the Bible translated by the parent into everyday language and made vivid and living can prove particularly helpful, especially if the parent perseveres with them. Good stories at bedtime lay up good treasure in little hearts. Little incidents that occur in the daytime can be likened to something previously read and the true way reinforced in a natural way.

It is the parents' great opportunity in the pre-school days especially, to store the minds of their children with the written Word of God, that they may have the best equipment for all time. It is like storing up ammunition for the day of battle, or storing up food for drought. It is helpful to children to teach them to memorise verses, passages, and stories from the Scriptures, so that the Word of God becomes familiar to their minds. Memorising what is learned in that way in these early years will remain in the memory. Of course they will not understand much at the time, but as they grow older and move away from home and into their life's work, it will go with them, and God will not fail on his part to make good use of the seed that the parents have sown into their hearts, which is the Word of God. By prayer it 'will accomplish the thing whereunto it is sent'.

We teach a child to walk until he goes alone, and likewise we ought to teach our children to read and depend on God's Word until their use of it

becomes quite natural. Some people think that the Bible is too hard and difficult for a child to read. Humanly speaking that may be so, but God means and asks that our children should be taught his Word, and he has his own way of interpreting it to them. God will scatter the crumbs they need and can assimilate, and the Holy Spirit will open their understanding little by little. We can safely leave a child in the hands of God the Holy Spirit to teach or to withhold all that a child is ready to know or not know.

For the Christian parent the Holy Scripture is a veritable mine of knowledge and wisdom, far outstripping every other source, for with its knowledge and wisdom comes power to bring to pass what it says. From the Word of God people can be given every kind of advice, and in it they will find the answer to many of their problems.

This is the thing that God has commanded us to do, 'to teach his Word diligently', 'to talk' our children into the knowledge of God and to do the will of God in his Kingdom. These are the golden hours and God forbid that we should miss them. It does not mean that the life of a child should be dull and uninteresting. Taught in the right way there is life, joy and sunshine in God's Word for a child. Plenty of play and activity mingled with right instruction in an unassuming way often inform the happiest years both of child and parent.

Pouring out the heart

It is always a joy and a privilege for a mother to pray with her child from the earliest years, but children must also be taught to pray on their own account. This helps much to take away the fear of God, and remove any sense of austerity that may lurk in children's

minds about God. It will bring a genuine awareness of God and enable them to become accustomed to depend on him for all they need. It is a good thing to teach children to pray aloud and become accustomed to hearing their own voice in prayer. Sometimes adults have spoken to me about prayer, and on enquiry I have found out that they were actually afraid to pray, or that they did not know how to approach God and what words to use! This would never happen where a child has been taught to pray to God in much the same way as he asks his parents for the things he desires, and tells them everything that concerns him in a natural way. Prayer can be a comforting thing to a child, as many have experienced, and it will always remain in his inner consciousness throughout life. A mother may feel too tired at night to be bothered, and it may need a special effort to pray with her child, but if she perseveres she will look back with gratitude to it in later years.

Search out the treasures of nature

We must certainly dwell on the practical ways of teaching the child, but there is another side as well. All of nature is alluring to a child. It is a refreshing thing both for parent and child to search out together the treasures that God scatters around us. The trees, flowers, birds, and the changing skies, the rain and the dew drops, can all be turned into parables of heavenly things, windows through which a child can see God and know him and love him, as Creator and Saviour. As the Psalmist says, 'Day unto day utters speech and night unto night shows knowledge; there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.' The changing seasons, each with its purpose, the stars and the wonder of the Milky Way, the little

creatures of earth like the tadpoles, the moths and the butterflies, the croaking frogs around the shining pools, the ways of the hare and of the fox, all of them have their lessons and fascination. The tiny animals who store for the winter, the cuckoo who makes others do its work, the common robin and the blackbird in the garden, the rolling tides and the myriad particles of sand, all teem with lessons God is teaching. How much better it is to fill the minds of children with these things, rather than with the artificial things that the world produces for the young people today! Nature can supply a child with an abundant interest, which will become a living reality. 'Whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things.'

Conclusion

If we teach our children diligently, as he commands, God will also surely fulfil his promise by teaching them himself as well. It is something we all need to ponder, why God commands us to do what only he can and will make effective. He commands us according to his will and at the same time wills what he commands. How comforting to realise that he has the heart of the truest Parent, for he is our Heavenly Father and knows all our failings and shortcomings, but with his strong and skilful hand, he will make perfect that which we do so imperfectly.

*we cannot lead our children
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Physical Phenomena that accompanied the Ulster Revival of 1859

Ken Jeffrey

The Ulster Revival of 1859 is one of the most significant events to have occurred in the province in modern times. Peter Gibbon has remarked, 'the Ulster religious revival of 1859 involved larger numbers of people in sustained common activity than any movement in rural Ulster between 1798 and 1913'.¹ Spiritual matters became of primary and urgent importance to whole communities, as thousands of men, women, and children experienced religious conversion. The following account provides a clear description of how the revival affected numerous towns and villages across the province.

Upon my return after two days absence at a meeting of Synod, I found the town in a state of great excitement. Many families had not gone to bed for two or three nights. From dozens of houses, night and day, you would hear, when passing along, loud cries for mercy from those under conviction, or the voice of prayer by kind visitors, or the sweet, soothing tones of sacred song. Business seemed at a standstill.²

Physical manifestations became the most controversial feature of the revival. They had been associated with previous religious movements and therefore they were not a new phenomenon. Indeed, prostrations were an important feature of late eighteenth century revivals in England and America. However, they had largely died out by the middle of the nineteenth century. Consequently, upon their reappearance, they became a contentious aspect of the revival in Ulster.

Nevertheless, it is important not to overestimate the significance of the physical prostrations which accompanied the revival. W Johnston, the minister of Townsend Street Presbyterian Church, complained, 'These manifestations have been far too much talked about, and regarded by many at a distance as if they formed the whole work, or the principle feature of it.'³ D. Adams, writing about his own parish at Ahoghill, commented, 'Of all the awakened (around 700) not more than one in seven have suffered anything like the bodily prostration, trance or convulsion'.⁴ Furthermore, the physical prostrations belonged to the infancy of

the revival and had disappeared by July. On the 15 August 1859, for example, the *Belfast Newsletter* reported that, 'Cases of external excitement are less noticeable'.⁵ Undoubtedly, the press were responsible for generating an excessive amount of interest in the physical prostrations. Therefore, it is incorrect to imagine that they were the chief characteristic of the revival.

In addition, there were undoubtedly several cases of physical manifestation associated with the revival which were fraudulent. For example, at Lisburn, two thousand people visited and paid to see one particular woman who claimed to have a mystic word or symbol on her bosom. Naturally, this produced a huge sensation and excited great curiosity. Mr Breakey investigated this case and concluded that it was produced by some clumsy process of manipulation.

Another issue which needs to be recognised when trying to understand the complexity of these manifestations is that many of the reports that discredited their appearance were unreliable. Many of them were written by men who had little direct, personal

dealings with the incidents they so roundly condemned and they frequently described isolated incidents in specific situations. For instance, the following account, written by Stopford, described his experience of revival meetings held in one Belfast mill during a week in July. He wrote:

It is notorious that hundreds of mill girls in Belfast have prayed, and are praying to be 'struck'. I was myself present in a Presbyterian Meeting House, at a prayer, offered with the most frenzied excitement and gesticulations that God would then and there descend and strike all the unconverted to the earth. That prayer was accompanied throughout by a storm of cries, and groans, and exclamations and Amens, all having the true hysteric sound. At the moment of the awful command to the Almighty to come down and strike, it was perfectly terrific. No such scene would be permitted in any Bedlam upon earth. The physical effect upon myself was as if I had been drinking plain brandy.⁶

Undoubtedly, there were men of poor judgment who taught that conversion involved receiving the revival and being struck. Physical prostrations were given excessive publicity and consequently they were apportioned too much importance in some quarters. Sometimes people fell prostrate out of sympathy for those genuinely affected, while on other occasions prostrations were effected by purely natural causes, such as ill ventilated and overheated mills. Consequently, it is difficult to distinguish between genuine and spurious cases of physical prostration.

Nevertheless, it is naive and unjust to condemn the genuine cases of prostration because of several accounts of the work of some exploitative men among young women in the Belfast

mills. There were an overwhelming number of genuine cases of people who experienced physical prostrations throughout the province. S J Moore, a minister from Ballymena, described how many in his congregation were 'smitten down' and fell 'as if killed instantly by a gun shot'.⁷ He described how,

They fall with a deep groan, some with a wild cry of horror, the greater number with the intensely earnest plea, 'Lord Jesus have mercy upon my soul'. The whole frame trembles as like an aspen leaf, an intolerable weight is felt upon the chest, a choking sensation is experienced, and relief from this found only in the loud, urgent prayer for deliverance. The perspiration rolls off the anguished victims; their very hair is moistened. Some pass through this exhausting conflict several times; others but once. There is no appetite for food; many will eat nothing for a number of days. They do not sleep, though they may lie down with their eyes shut. The language and the looks, and the terrible struggles and loud desperate deprecations, tell convincingly, as the parties themselves afterwards declare, that they are in deadly conflict with the old serpent. Usually the bodily distress and mental anguish continue till some degree of confidence in Christ is found. Then the look, the tone, the gestures instantly change. The aspect of anguish and despair is changed for that of gratitude, and triumph, and adoration.⁸

There are many reports written by observers who witnessed people falling prostrate during solemn religious services. These occurred right across the province and describe scenes similar to Moore's account. The volume of these testimonies provides conclusive evidence that many people were genuinely affected in a physical

manner during the revival.

It was accepted among the leaders of the revival that prostrations were not necessarily signs of conversion. Indeed, many ministers were concerned to differentiate between the causes of a conviction of sin and the subsequent religious conversion that may follow. J Morgan wrote that, '(God) may use them to awaken attention, but they do not save or renew the soul. They may be the means, but they are not the ends'.⁹ Thus, physical prostrations were not generally accepted as necessary signs of genuine conversion.

Nevertheless, the prostrations created the curiosity upon which the revival

it is important not to overestimate the significance of the physical prostrations

flourished. The daily newspapers contained colourful reports about those who had been 'stricken'. A large number of pamphlets were printed that discussed the strange phenomenon. The prostrations became the topic of conversations right across the land. Hence, it became widely accepted that the physical prostrations served the purpose of awakening the people of Ulster to a consideration of spiritual matters. They attracted people to evangelistic meetings. Speaking at the annual Evangelical Alliance Conference in Nottingham in 1860, the Reverend Professor Gibson said, 'There can be no doubt that, by their startling character, they arrested and subdued the minds of thousands.'¹⁰ Hugh Hunter of Bellaguy, who was glad when the

prostrations ceased, nevertheless, wrote in a letter dated 25 October, 1859, 'They were sent by God to serve a special end, and when that purpose was served they ceased... Every prostration, I firmly believe, was a sermon, a thrilling appeal to the profligate and a solemn warning to those who were at ease in Zion'.¹¹ Finally, Mr Johnston of Townsend Street Presbyterian Church described his understanding of the purpose of the prostrations as they affected his congregation. He said,

In our congregation there were not many cases of the kind; but such as did occur, served, to my knowledge, very much the purpose of the

a storm of cries, and groans, and exclamations and amens

rushing wind preceding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. They roused the slumbering mass; they startled whole streets; and they were overruled to send many back to their homes and closets to think of their own lives, to cry to God for their own souls.¹²

Therefore, the prostrations generated enormous interest in the Revival. Their purpose and effect appears to have been the spiritual reawakening of the people of Ulster.

Particular sections of the community were more affected than others by the physical prostrations. Critics of the physical manifestations said that the majority of those 'stricken' were mainly from 'the ignorant, uneducated, hard worked, and easily impressed class, and,

in the proportion of nineteen out of every twenty, young and excitable females'.¹³ However, the physical prostrations which accompanied the revival did not affect only young women who worked in the Belfast mills. It does appear, however, that those of a lower social status who did not attend church frequently formed the majority of those who were affected in a physical manner at revival meetings. Ewart's Row in Belfast, which was inhabited almost entirely by mill workers, and the working class districts of Ballymena, were scenes of great religious frenzy.¹⁴ J. McCosh reported, 'The bodily expression has prevailed largely among those who have never been in the habit of restraining their feelings.' Indeed, when he spoke with those of the educated classes, especially students, who had been converted during the revival, he found no cases of prostration.¹⁵ Robert Wallace, a Methodist minister from Londonderry wrote, '... as my experience goes, few of the upper, or even middle classes became subjects of bodily prostration'.¹⁶ Finally, Mr Blakely of Monaghan remarked,

With regard to prostrations, so far as I have seen them, they have been confined to the ignorant; I should rather say to the ill instructed in the doctrines of the Gospel. The cases of deep prostration and loss of consciousness for hours have all been of that class.¹⁷

Therefore, despite the huge publicity they attracted, the young women of the Belfast mills were not the only group of people in the province who were affected by physical prostrations. However, the prostrations did appear to affect, in the majority of cases, those from the lower social orders.

A common criticism levelled against the physical prostrations that accompanied the revival was that they took place in highly charged,

emotional, religious meetings. However, evidence firmly supports the view that prostrations did not affect everyone in similar circumstances. On the contrary, they occurred in a variety of settings. The Belfast Newsletter printed the following report that described how prostrations often took place in solemn open air services.

John Hare was present at a small meeting of about two hundred and fifty, in the open air. The service consisted of prayer, singing and a sermon. No effort, as we understood, was made to produce excitement of any kind. The service was conducted with solemnity and calmness throughout, and at the close over thirty persons became affected.¹⁸

People were often 'stricken' in circumstances far removed from the frenzy of highly charged religious meetings. Mr Killen, the minister of the rural parish of Ballykelly, described how prostrations affected his parish. He commented that,

They were not produced by crowded meetings. Many of them occurred in the open air, in the cool of the summer evenings, some of them in the fields, and some by the roadside, as parties were returning home at midnight, and some in their own houses.¹⁹

This account is substantiated by another article printed in the *Irish Presbyterian Missionary Herald* of July 1859. It reported,

Persons have been affected in this remarkable way without attending any public meeting, in their own houses, where they were far from all occasions of excitement... not a few have been 'struck down' in the market, in the field whilst at work, or walking along by the way.²⁰

Therefore, the physical prostrations of the revival were heterogeneous in nature. They did not strike everyone

in comparable circumstances. Prostrations affected some people at solemn religious services, some in fields, others in homes, others at market places, as much as they did those who were gathered in ill ventilated mills. It is interesting to note that prostrations appeared in rural as well as urban communities. Indeed, they displayed great diversity in the manner in which they affected people.

The physical phenomena that accompanied the revival evoked at least three separate reactions from church leaders. The Methodists, who were very well accustomed to dealing with such phenomena, were among those who accepted and celebrated the prostrations as an authentic work of God's Spirit. They believed that God produced and used these manifestations in order to lead people to conversion.

A group of Anglican clergy, who supported the revival in general but judged the physical manifestations as a counter work of the devil which had infiltrated the movement, formed a second group. Salmon maintained, 'It is in no spirit of hostility that I have laboured to distinguish from the real work of God those human elements which, in my judgment, disfigure the movement'.²¹ These men believed that 'Prostrations are simply symptoms of nervous derangement brought on by religious excitement'.²² Stopford believed that prostrations were a disease. He argued, 'Can the gospel of Christ, truly preached, produce hysteria in woman now, any more when it was preached by Christ?'²³ Therefore, he asserted that the Holy Spirit would not use it now and that it was produced and propagated by men. Dr Cheyne wrote, 'We firmly believe that the Gospel received simply, never, since it was first preached, produced a single case of insanity'.²⁴ These men condemned every appearance of a physical

manifestation in the revival as the work of the devil.

Finally, there were some church leaders, predominantly Presbyterians, who were prepared to accept the prostrations as a work of the Holy Spirit. However, they qualified this by saying the Holy Spirit was using, rather than producing these dramatic signs. This balanced reaction towards the physical manifestations was displayed in a resolution passed at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1859. It stated,

That, while the Assembly leaves to ministers to deal in Christian wisdom with individual cases as they arise, the brethren are earnestly reminded of the necessity of guarding, on the one hand, against cherishing undue suspicions of the reality of the work of the Holy Spirit; and on the other, of adopting any course of procedure whereby our people may be led to mistake bodily impressions, or even convictions of sin, for genuine conversion to God.²⁵

Generally, Presbyterian ministers accepted the physical manifestations of the revival, but they urged caution and encouraged their congregations to ensure that prostrations were more of God and less of man.

Therefore, the Ulster revival of 1859 was the single most significant movement which swept across Ulster in the nineteenth century. The physical prostrations which accompanied it were its most controversial feature. Undoubtedly, while there were some fraudulent examples of prostration in the revival, there were many authentic cases which created an enormous interest in the movement. These prostrations affected, in most instances, men and women from the lower social classes, but they struck people in a wide variety of social settings, at religious services, in homes, at market places and

in fields. Despite some opposition, the majority of church leaders accepted the prostrations as the means by which God led many people in Ulster to conversion and a consideration of religious matters.

Today people continue to experience physical manifestations as part of their conversion and renewal in times of revival. The Spirit of God has caused many to weep and cry out and others to fall and shake with convulsions as he has worked in hearts and minds. Falling and trembling have historical and scriptural precedents, and have been the physical responses of many people who have been converted or renewed by the Spirit of God. History

prostrations were not necessarily signs of conversion

testifies to the reality and authenticity of physical prostration as a means by which God works in the depths of people's lives.

Unfortunately, the church has not always acknowledged or embraced the genuineness of the work of God's Spirit when it involves manifestations which affect people in a physical manner. Donald Meek, commenting upon the attitudes that greeted the prostrations which accompanied the 1842 revival in Skye, has written, 'Similar phenomena have manifested themselves, and have generated expressions of approval, skepticism, guarded acceptance or outright rejection among those who have witnessed their presence'.²⁶ Thus, history testifies also to the wide range of responses which are made towards

physical phenomena that accompany religious movements.

Revivals that are accompanied by physical manifestations will continue to create controversy and debate. In order to evaluate the validity of any religious movement it is wise to consider these words spoken by J B Heard to a crowd at Newry in 1859. He urged the people to,

Remember that the most excellent gifts of the Spirit are faith, hope and love. They do not attract the wonder of others, but they are the sure proofs to ourselves that we are born of God. When all that is spasmodic shall have passed away, like the foam of the sea, when the tempest is over, these graces will abide, to the glory of God and the good of man. Time will tell how much of this Revival has been of God, and how much not. The fruit, not the blossom, must test the tree.²⁷

On occasions physical manifestations can become a distraction as people become absorbed in the mere

phenomena. Therefore, ultimately, it is the presence or the absence of spiritual fruit borne in the lives of converted and renewed people that must finally determine the authenticity of religious movements and whether they are works of God.

Ken Jeffrey, Aberdeen, July 1998.

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Worship in Exodus & Its Implications For Today

David Searle

I have long been disturbed by much of the thinking about worship today in evangelical congregations. The assumption constantly appears to be that if the style of services is changed and the old hymns replaced by contemporary choruses, the evident 'flatness' of worship will disappear and new life will surge through the congregation. Those who argue this way may have found the spider's web, but they certainly have failed to find the spider. The real cause for dull, lifeless worship lies in the lack of spirituality of those worshipping. That is not to say that contemporary hymns and songs should not be used. Rather is to assert that worship can never be truly revitalised until the worshipping community is revived.

I offer the following study from Exodus as an illustration of some of the biblical principles which need to be preserved in all our congregational

worship. God has given us a pattern and we neglect it to our loss.

Worship in Exodus

Some Aspects of Worship before Sinai (ch.1-17)

Awe, reverence: We cannot fail to be struck by the awe, reverence, and fear of Moses when God spoke to him through the burning bush. He hid his face, afraid to look on God. God told him to keep his distance and to remove his sandals for the place where he is standing is holy ground (3:1-6).

Service (by offering sacrifices): The repeated requests to Pharaoh to let the people go to serve God in the wilderness use the Hebrew word 'abad (LXX *latreuo*), which English translations render either *serve* or *worship*. This service or worship is

defined either as holding a festival or sacrificing to the Lord—*offering sacrifices to the Lord in the wilderness*.¹

It is important to follow up the meaning and use of *latreuo*, the Greek equivalent of 'abad. Note that in secular Greek, *latreuo* means "to render services", "to serve," with no thought of reward and irrespective of whether the one who serves is a slave or free'.² *Latreuo* is almost invariably used (90 occurrences in the LXX) for the Hebrew 'abad. Only when the reference is to human relationships, LXX renders 'abad with *douleuein*. Otherwise *latreuo* is used consistently of religious service, particularly of sacrificial and cultic acts.

In the NT, *latreuo* occurs 21 times, 3 of which derive from the OT.³ The influence of the LXX is clear. The word is never used of human relations or secular service, only of service offered to God. Several of its occurrences

clearly refer to the OT sacrificial system.⁴ However, other occurrences give us an insight into how the 'service/worship' of the book of Exodus is now to be understood by NT believers.

Zechariah's song of praise concludes: '... to remember his holy covenant... and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days'.⁵ Zechariah is serving as a priest and therefore his use of *latreuo* reflects LXX usage. However he sees the 'holy covenant' in a prophetic light which is now to be fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah who will enable true *worship* as God desires it in holiness and righteousness.

the devil is asking Jesus to become his servant

In his address to Agrippa, Paul makes clear reference to the same prophetic element in the 'service/worship' of the old covenant: 'This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night'.⁶ In his defence before Felix, he himself sees Christ's Way he is following as God's intended fulfilment of the OT 'service/worship': 'I admit I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way which they [his accusers] call a sect'.⁷ Again, he can boldly confess 'the God whose I am and whom I serve'.⁸ Indeed, he sees his whole life of ministry as one of divine 'service/worship'.⁹

The noun *latreia* is only used 5 times in the NT. Three occurrences refer to

the sacrificial ministry of the OT cultus: Romans 9:4, 'the temple worship'; Hebrews 9:1, 'The first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary'; and 9:6 '... the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry'. Of the 2 remaining, John 16:2 speaks of those who kill followers of Jesus as believing they do *service* to God, whereas Romans 12:1 gathers up Paul's magisterial account of Christ's work of redemption, justification, atonement and reconciliation into the inescapable conclusion that the only fitting response is a spiritual *worship* which demands believers yield their bodies as living sacrifices and be renewed in their minds to prove that good and perfect will of God.

We should not neglect the significance of all this for the use of *latreuo* in Matthew 4:10 (=Lk.4:8). In reply to the devil's temptation of earthly power over all the world, Jesus replies, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only,"' indicating that 'service/worship' is to be understood as the yielding of one's whole heart to belong to God alone. The devil is asking Jesus to become his servant. This meaning of the word accords well with Paul's usage of *latreuo* as we have seen it above.

It may well be that the word 'abad, service, is used in Exodus of worship deliberately to contrast the slavery of the Hebrews under Pharaoh with them as a redeemed people in their new covenantal relationship to Yahweh as their divine Master'.¹⁰ Until the redemption from Egypt, they had been slaves under a cruel tyrant. Now as the people of God, they are bound to the Lord and under gracious obligation to serve him only. Hence their worship is predominantly referred to as 'service'

because it takes in their very existence and all of their living.

The Passover

In the Passover, the people of God of later generations not only remembered, but again lived through the events of their deliverance from Egypt under the sign of the sacrificed Paschal lamb as if they themselves participated in it. However it is important to note that the Hebrew noun 'abodah, service, is used to describe the observance of the Passover'.¹¹ (Note the Passover is closely connected with the Sabbath.)

In the Synoptic Gospels, the meal during which Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper is ten times referred to as 'the Passover'. However, only once in the rest of the NT is the Lord referred to as the Passover lamb.¹²

Sung Praise

In Exodus 15, we have an example of sung praise in the Song of Moses which was used in the celebration of the deliverance from the Egyptian armies in the crossing of the Red Sea. This is the first explicit example in Scripture of sung praise. We should note the following points:

- the title, 'Song of Moses' suggests the praise is musical
- there are elements of retrospection (vv.2-12), recalling the mighty acts of God, and anticipation (vv.13ff) of what he will yet do for them
- there is a theology of salvation and judgement (vv.19)
- there is explicit mention of musical instruments, dancing and singing (vv.20f)

Not only the Psalter, but also the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs of the NT church¹³ are clearly in biblical continuity with the sung praise of Exodus.

Prayer

Moses' day of prayer with the support of Aaron & Hur¹⁴ contains important principles of prayer established early in the history of God's people. The rod of God, a shepherd's staff, perhaps represents the foolishness of prayer in the eyes of those who do not belong to the worshipping community.¹⁵ While Joshua fought the Amalekites on their own terms, the 'secret weapon' which gave him the overwhelming advantage was prayer. The support of Aaron and Hur illustrates the partnership necessary in urgent supplication for the hard-pressed people of God.¹⁶ The perseverance in prayer needed to repulse the attack intended to annihilate the Hebrews establishes the necessity for prevailing prayer to be persistent prayer.¹⁷ The dedication of the memorial set up after Joshua's victory explicitly claims the prayer to have been supplication before the throne of God: 'For hands were lifted up to the throne of the Lord'.

Sinai and the Covenant

The consecration of the people

Chapter 19 demands the people consecrate themselves to be ready for the giving of the Decalogue. Yahweh reminds Moses of all he has done for Israel, rescuing them from Egypt and bringing them to himself (v.3f.) He offers the covenant to them, declaring they will be a treasured possession, 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (v.5f.) Note the reference to the past redemption, the present demands and the future promises (vv.4-6). Moses rehearses all God has said and the people respond affirmatively (v.7f.) God then intimates he will come to

Moses in a dense cloud so that the people will be aware of him conversing with Moses and will recognise in Moses God's chosen mediator (v.9f.)

The people must consecrate themselves and wash their clothes and so be ready for the theophany on Sinai. However, the people may not approach the mountain where God is communing with Moses, death being the penalty for disobeying this strict injunction (vv.10ff.) This awesome, unapproachable holiness of God is a dominant note in the chapter (vv.12,21,23). The people tremble at the approach of God (v.16b).

There were visible elements to the theophany, smoke and the shaking of the mountain (v.18), and a spoken element—the voice of God (v.19).

The Ten Commandments

At the heart of the Decalogue is the demand that they serve/worship only God: You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not *bow down* (chawah) *to them or worship them*; ('abad, LXX latreuo)...¹⁸

Again the unapproachable holiness of God is emphasised together with the terror which is engendered in all who are aware of his presence even at a distance. Only the chosen Mediator may draw near to God (vv.18-21).

Regulations for the worshipping community

Chapters 21-23 set out regulations for their social life as a worshipping community. To live holy lives in accordance with these regulations is nothing less than to worship (serve) God. They provide the spirit of 'abad (worship/ service) and the necessary cultus for all other more direct forms of worship/ service. The regulations cover

Hebrew slaves, personal injuries, protection of property, social responsibility, justice and mercy, Sabbath laws and the three annual festivals. The angel of God will go before them into Canaan, but the people must keep themselves in the pure worship of the Lord God. Obedience will be blessed.

Ratification of the Covenant

The ratification of the covenant is recorded in Exodus 24. The account contains strong elements of worship, before the narrative moves on to the regulations for the Tent of Meeting. Notice several elements in this worship:

- there was need for a mediator—'You

the 'secret weapon' which gave him the overwhelming advantage was prayer

are to worship (bow down) at a distance' (v.1)

the worship was word-orientated—'Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws... he wrote down everything the Lord had said... he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people' (vv.3,4,7; cf.v.12)

- the covenant was sealed with the blood of burnt offerings and peace offerings sprinkled on the altar and on the people (vv.5f, 8.)
- the verbal response made by the people (vv.3b, 7b.)
- the vision of God granted to the elders (v.9f.)
- the awe and holiness of the divine glory is emphasised (vv.15ff.)

The Tent of Meeting

The Tent of Meeting is the meeting place between God and people. Such encounters can only take place on God's terms which include times, intermediaries and sacrifices. Activity there is described as 'service'.¹⁹ The layout of the Tent of Meeting suggests its significance for NT believers. The tribes are sited around the Tent of Meeting, three on each side, but Judah (meaning 'praise'²⁰) is encamped at the entrance to the outer court.

Notice that worshippers must pass through the encampment of Judah to enter the precincts of the Tent of Meeting,

*enter his gates with praise
looking outwards and
upwards to God*

- therefore they enter his gates with praise, looking outwards from themselves and upwards to the God they have come to worship
- at once come to the need for sacrifice for sin—the altar
- next reach the blessing of a cleansed conscience—the laver
- on their behalf the priest then enters the Holy Place
- offers prayers (for the worshippers)—the censer
- depends on the illumination of the Spirit—the candlestick
- accepts nourishment from God—the bread of the presence
- on their behalf the high priest once each year enters the Holy of Holies where the Shekinah Glory rests on the covering over the Decalogue

within the ark of the covenant

We remind ourselves again that the priestly functions are termed 'abodah, service/worship (NIV 'ministry').

The High Priest

The subject of the High Priest could only be adequately treated in an article dealing with it exclusively. Here sufficient to note that all tent of meeting worship required the offices of a priest or high priest. While believers under the New Covenant are all priests unto God,²¹ it is too often forgotten that Christ is forever our High Priest and that no worship/service can be offered to God apart from his continuing, permanent priesthood.²²

Glory²³

The Israelites had already seen from a distance the glory of the Lord and it looked like a consuming fire.²⁴ Moses prayed, 'Now show me your glory' (33:18). It is important to put this prayer in its context.

In the previous chapter, we have recorded the incident of the golden calf. Moses had been on Mount Sinai with God, and the people had grown impatient and demanded Aaron make them a god they could see.²⁵ They then offered burnt sacrifices to the golden calf and bowed down before it. God's anger burned against the people and he declared he would destroy them. But Moses interceded for them. Nevertheless, judgement falls.

Now in chapter 33:7-11 we have an account of a tent-of-meeting—not, note, *the* Tent of Meeting whose plans have been revealed in chapter 26, but which has not yet been constructed.²⁶ This earlier tent-of-meeting is apparently in answer to Moses' plea to God not to destroy the people, but is *outside the camp some distance away* (v.7) and appears to incorporate in its site an

element of God's anger against the people for their idolatry.²⁷ God is not 'in the midst of his people' but has withdrawn from them. He has not, however, abandoned them.

Follow the account through in chapter 33, verse by verse:

12: Moses in his prayer asks who is with him as a fellow-leader. His brother Aaron has gravely sinned in making the golden calf, thus Moses feels alone and shares with God the loneliness of leadership.

13: He prays for grace and reminds God that these are his people. This whole venture was inspired and directed by God. It was not Moses idea!

14: God reassures him and promises his presence will be with him.

15: Moses asks that God will no longer be outside the camp at some distance but that he come and be among them people, his glorious presence manifest in their midst.

16: It is that very presence that will distinguish them from all other nations. Otherwise, what difference between them and the many other nomadic tribes that inhabited the middle east of that time? Only the manifest presence of God will mark his people out as different.

17: We must note that as God graciously responds to Moses' prayer, there is never again in Exodus any mention of his presence being 'outside the camp'.

20: So we come to Moses' prayer that God will show him his glory. Moses cannot see God's face, for no one can see God and live. But Moses will be covered by the hand of God and see the fading glow of the divine Presence as he passes by.

34:6-7: Moses ascends the mountain and God passes by Moses, the divine voice declaring the character

of God as he does so:

...abounding in love and faithfulness,

love is hesed, covenant love

faithfulness is 'emeth, certainty, stability, trustworthiness, fidelity

Now note the clear NT connections in the Prologue of John's Gospel with Exodus 33–34.

- 'The Word became flesh and "tented" with us'—not 'outside the camp' as in Exodus 33:7ff, but with us (Gk 'en)
- 'We have seen his glory...' cf. Exodus 33.18, 'Now show me your glory.'²⁸
- 'full of grace and truth'—cf. Exodus 34:6f, hesed & 'emeth
- 'no one has ever seen God...' cf. Ex.33:20, 'You cannot see my face, for no-one may see me and live.'
- 'we have seen the One and Only... God the One and Only.' Cf. the revelation of God in Ex.33.21-23 where God covers Moses as he passes by, and the divine declaration in 34:6-7.
- 'he has made him known'—Gk. exegeto (cf. our English word 'exegeted'). God has broken into time and space in the person of his Son who has fully revealed him.
- 'grace upon grace', literally it is 'grace in place of (Gk 'anti) grace'. Not 'epi, one grace on top of another as in NIV: 'one blessing after another'. Rather, *a grace replacing a grace*. The clear implication is that 'law' was a grace, now replaced by another grace—the grace (and truth) that came by Christ. We tend to think of the 'law' as a 'demand', grim and forbidding. Certainly one function of the law is to condemn our sin. But it has also a gracious function and is given within the covenant. In John's understanding here of law

as a 'grace', it becomes prophetic. Christ did not come to abolish it, but to fulfil it (Mt.5:17). It points forward to the glories of Christ and his righteousness.

Implications for Today

It now remains to focus on several implications for the worship of God's People today.

Worship is a whole life

Much of the Christian Church today has evacuated the word 'worship' of its biblical meaning. Worship is commonly understood to be praising God through songs. We have seen that while singing is unquestionably an element in worship, the biblical concept of worship is far wider and fuller than the singing of praise to God.

Rather is it essential service of God in the sense of Romans 12:1f.—believers handing themselves over utterly to God as living sacrifices—their bodies, minds, wills, and affections. God must be central in all living, as in the first two commandments, and exalted as the only One whom we serve and obey. We are redeemed from the tyranny of our old slavemaster (Pharaoh) to serve the living God who graciously enters into covenant relationship with us.

Sung praise of God must express theological truth: Too many so-called contemporary 'praise-songs' have little or no theological content. Moses song gives us an example of how theologically focused and concentrated the sung praise of God's people ought to be.

The sense of the transcendence of God in worship: We have to reject the aspect of Pinnock's 'openness' of God which would appear to reject the divine transcendence in favour of an

overwhelming imminence. The Almighty God must never be replaced by an Almatey God. While we rejoice that the very Word has become flesh and tabernacled with us, we still see his glory as he reveals the face of a holy and transcendent God. Therefore, the confidence by which we now enter the Holy of Holies must never exclude awe and humility before the God who is eternally a consuming fire (Heb.12:28f.)

A pattern for worship

The layout of the Tent of Meeting provides us with a pattern for corporate worship in which the following

only the manifest presence of God will mark out his people as different

elements should always be present:

- 'enter his gates with praise', looking away from ourselves and upwards to the majesty and power of God
- then come to the sacrifice for sin—the altar—in confession, pleading the blood of Christ
- next know the peace of sins pardoned and a conscience cleansed—the laver
- enter the place of service/worship where the illumination of the Spirit of God (the candlestick) enables the bread of the presence to supply our spiritual needs as we feed on the Word of Life
- offer prayers of adoration, supplication, intercession and thanks-giving—the golden censer
- enter with confidence, through the

offices of our merciful and great High Priest the Holy of Holies to gaze upon the face of God in the assurance that all the condemnation of the demands of the law are covered by the blood of Christ and in the knowledge that the New Covenant is founded on 'better promises'²⁹

I would urge that all public worship (better, 'Divine Service') should contain all the above elements, whether in sung praise, prayer, Bible reading, the preached Word and the administration of the sacraments. This is not to exclude other elements within

evangelical Christianity is in danger of becoming more worldly than 'liberal Christianity'

worship as unfolded in the rich variety of the Psalms involving the expression of deep emotions in various experiences of life; nor is to exclude the glorifying of God and mutual encouragement of believers by believers through the word and prayer.³⁰

Worship should be theocentric and trinitarian: While the Spirit of God is not explicitly mentioned in Exodus (other than with regard to Bezalel),³¹ it is inconceivable that he was not constantly active in executing the Father's purposes for his people throughout the entire book. Indeed, Hebrews tells us the Holy Spirit was actively at work in the planning of the Tent of Meeting.³²

However, the theocentricity of

worship in Exodus must not be lost sight of, in spite of the clear portrayal of the person and work of Christ everywhere evident (in the Passover, manna, water from the rock, mediatorial role of Moses, high priestly office and garments, etc.) My submission is that Exodus teaches us—not Christocentric worship but—theocentric worship which is always trinitarian.

The High Priestly activity of Christ

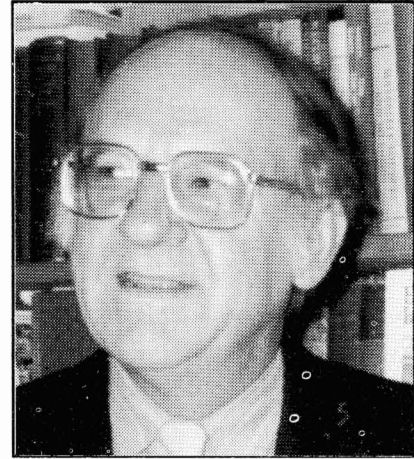
The 20th century church appears to have neglected the high priestly office of Christ and concentrated instead on his kingly rule and sacrificial death. But he is still our merciful and great High Priest, without whose mediatorial offices we cannot offer worship/service, whether as sung praise, spoken prayer or divine service of mind, will and affections. He ever carries on his shoulders and his heart the names of all his people (as the high priest did).³³ All our worship is offered therefore only through him acting on our behalf. Murray McCheyne said that as he conducted worship, it was as if Christ were on his knees in the vestry praying for him!

Consecration is essential for divine service/worship: Evangelical Christianity is in danger of becoming even more worldly than 'liberal Christianity' in that while evangelicals do not generally accept a prosperity theology, the materialism of the wealthy West is eating into the heart of evangelical churches. The call of Exodus for God's people to consecrate themselves³⁴ speaks of a separation from all that is profane and would point forward to the separation from the world which is such a strong element of NT teaching.³⁵ The real secret of living worship lies less in the

use of contemporary songs than is supposed and more in the consecration, and consequently the holiness, of the community of faith.

Endnotes

- 1 Exodus 3:12; 4:23; 7:16; 8:1,20; 9:1,13; 10:3, 7f.,11,24,26; 12:31.
- 2 Strathmann, *TDNT*, ed.Kittel, IV, p.59
- 3 Mt4:10=Lk.4:8 and Acts 7:7
- 4 e.g., Heb.10:2; 9:9; 13:11; Acts 7:7
- 5 Lk.1:72ff
- 6 Acts 26:7
- 7 Acts 24:14
- 8 Acts 27:23
- 9 Rom.1:9. Cf. Phil.3:3; 2Tim.1:3
- 10 I am grateful to Dr Desmond Alexander for this suggestion.
- 11 12:25,26; 13:5 (Passover 3), in the LXX (which is also used consistently of activity in the tent-of-meeting 30:16; 35:21 etc.
- 12 1 Cor.5:7.
- 13 Eph.5:19, cf. Col.3:16
- 14 Ex.17:8-16
- 15 Cf. Gen.46:34; 1Cor.1:25; 2Cor.10:4, etc.
- 16 Cf. Mt.26:36ff; Acts 12:12 etc.
- 17 Cf. Lk.18:1-8, 1Tim.2:8; 2Tim.1:3 etc.
- 18 Exod. 20:3-6
- 19 Exod. 27:19, 30:16; 35:21,24; 36:1,3,5, 39:40, 35:19; 39:1,41.
- 20 Gen.29:35.
- 21 1Pet.2:9; Rev.1:6
- 22 Heb.5:6; 7:24f; 8:1, etc.
- 23 I am indebted to D.A.Carson for the thinking in this section. See, D.A.Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, IVP. Leicester, 1991, pp.132ff. Carson acknowledges his debt to Ruth B.Edwards, *JST* 32, 1988, pp.3-15.
- 24 Exod. 24:17.
- 25 Exod. 32:1.
- 26 see Exod.36:8-38
- 27 See John M Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, Presbyterian & Reformed, Appendix 2. Reviewed in *Evangelicals Now*, April 1998, p.21.
- 28 Note that his 'glory' is seen in the Cross, Jn13:31;17:1 etc.—because of the human problem of rebellion, rejection of God and idolatry which is reflected in Exodus 32, the event of the golden calf.
- 29 Heb.8:6.
- 30 See Mal. 3:16.
- 31 Exod.28:3; 31:2; 35:31.
- 32 Heb.9:8.
- 33 Exod.28:9ff., 15ff.
- 34 Exod.19:10,14,22.
- 35 1 Jn.2:15ff. etc.



Ann Allen *meets* David Wright

David Wright's office can be found high in the eaves of New College Edinburgh and it was there on a wet blustery afternoon that I ran him to ground and explored some of the areas of interest and of abiding concern for the man who is the new Chairperson of the Rutherford House Trustees.

Ann: David how does one become a Theologian? Where did your interest in theology spring from?

David: The basic drive to study theology came for me from a call to ministry which followed my coming to faith through an excellent Crusader Class in Tooting, London. I didn't go to an Anglican College, although I was an accepted candidate for ministry, but instead went to Cambridge for a combined degree in Classics and Theology. That was followed by three further years of post graduate work at Oxford. I was very involved with

InterVarsity, UCCF as it now is, in both universities so my influential formation really was, if you like, thoroughly evangelical but non church, and some people might say that still shows!

Ann: At that time there was no design on your part, was there to spend the rest of your life in Scotland?

David: Not at all! I had only ever been north of the border once but I applied here and was appointed to teach Early Church History. I look back indeed with embarrassment at my early attempts in lecturing for there was no training, just the assumption that one would take to it like a duck to water. I remember some of the deadly student lectures I endured as a student myself and think students of those generations had to be pretty long suffering.

Ann: Church History might not

have an immediate appeal to students. What personal benefits have you received through your long term commitment to it?

David: I've had the privilege of belonging to the strongest Church History department in the country. There were till recently four of us on the staff here. I suppose I would describe myself more as a historian of Theology or a theologian of Christian thought.

One of the things Church History does for me is to give me a concern when I look at theological claims as to what their actual cash value is in terms of real church life. That's why I have given time to the subject of Christian Baptism over the years. It is one thing to have a high theology of Baptism. It is another to ask how does it work out in actual practice. We baptise babies by the thousand... where do they end up? History provides a sense of

perspective and depth giving us ballast and defending us from becoming a prey to every new wave and possibility that comes along. However I'm not saying historians are bound to be conservative by temperament, because I don't think I am at heart.

Ann: Would these benefits and others be obvious to students for the ministry coming here to study?

David: It is terribly important for people to know not just where they and their own traditions have come from but where the Church as a whole has come from. We happen to live in a time that is pretty impatient of tradition and does not have much reverence for the past, but whether we like it or not we would not be here as a Church in Scotland without forebears from Columba onwards. We all stand on their shoulders.

I sense that a lot of students come with a prejudice against Church History, not expecting to find it exciting. I'm not saying that they will find excitement necessarily, but all our teaching is well organised and well done. Principally our basic course in history has been exceptionally helpful to all our students in giving them a base and framework for all the other figures and developments they will be exposed to. It's a course honed and reworked over the years and is now used very widely, even internationally as a teaching basis.

Ann: That's all very well, but what would you say to those who would reply... So what? We see a new thing happening such as growth in new churches that owe nothing to the past.

David: We have to accept as Protestants that the Church can become so corrupt that it needs a new beginning. It is true

that in the reformation while newness was present nevertheless there was incredible regard for the Bible and the previous early centuries of Church life. I am somewhat nervous of those who say that there is nothing satisfactory in what is available. The reformers thought they were not doing as the Anabaptists did, making a clean sweep from the time of the apostles. I want to be reforming in that sense rather than a builder *de novo*, a restorationist as some would say. I think if we are not careful we lose our sense of indebtedness to the past. Even in terms of basic Bible translation we are indebted to generations of scholarship. So I want to see continuity. I am very keen that the church not be trapped in the past but live in and respond to the present.

Ann: But do you see signs of cultural relevance in the life of the Church in Scotland today?

David: There are some areas of church life in Scotland where that is an acute challenge. The danger is not that they are going to be blown away with novelty, but rather that they are trapped in a cultural ghetto of the past.

Ann: In the light of that, are there any observable trends that you can identify in the present generation of students for ministry? Does anything differentiate them from previous generation?

David: It's a dangerous thing to say, but I reckon that the intellectual quality of students has dropped. We are seeing less high flyers. This may not necessarily be a bad thing. Also fewer and fewer students are aware of clear defining lines, rather they reflect the general inclusivist nature of our age. They would identify themselves as evangelicals but are not exactly clear as

to what are the distinctive marks of evangelicalism and fail to set up landmarks that are not to be surrendered. Past intolerance may not have been a good thing but I fear a present blandness that will never say what might offend... I sense we have fewer students who are going to make their mark. Many will successfully maintain a ministry but where are those who will set the heather on fire?

Ann: If I were to remark that I observe a distinct lack of oratory in present day preaching, that preachers communicate in a casual, user friendly way, how would you respond?

David: This is interesting because we belong to a movement within the Kirk which places a great deal of emphasis on preaching and yet you are quite right. It is very difficult to point to great preachers. Within the four faculties we have a special lectureship in preaching 'The Warrack Lectureship', and it has run into difficulty. Certainly in the States they tend to think we have hardly any outstanding preachers here.

Ann: Why do you think that is?

David: Not everyone will like me saying this but expository preaching as it has been done is partly responsible for this. If one starts where one reached chapter and verse last time and carries on from there it seems to me one does not ask some of the hard questions that take a lot of struggle; like the structure of the sermon as a whole, where it begins from, where it touches common ground. I think within the evangelical church in Scotland we have had too much preaching that is like enthusiastic lecturing. I say that recognising that that is my own style in part. I don't want sermons to be less scholarly but

we need the ability to work with the scriptural text moving to and fro between that horizon and the present day horizon where people are. We are not good at translation and application and the loss of oratory along with these must be responsible for people being bored by sermons. That must be the most unforgivable sin of a sermon, that it is boring!

Ann: Can good preachers be made?

David: There is a natural gift, a nurtured gift, an afflatus... there just doesn't seem to be much of it around! Things like vocabulary and imagery are so important and we really need to be streetwise about our culture. If I were a minister, depending on my congregation, I think I would have to watch one of the modern soaps, something I have never done, but that is what influences people's lives and so we need knowledge of it

Ann: So how should we be training people for ministry here in New College?

David: That raises very big questions and the answers may frighten us. Is it right to take people out of their church context and plant them in an academic course for 4,5,6, or more years? I think universities are going to become more and more secularised and the divinity faculties within them. I don't want to be a Jeremiah but already there are aspects of the professional tasks that cannot be dealt with satisfactorily in the academic course. Liturgy and counselling are one thing but what about the fundamental missionary task of the Church, evangelism. I use that word in the sense of personal evangelism, leading souls to Christ. It would be inappropriate to deal with sensitive issues, for example Christian ministry in predominantly ethnic

cultures, the moral and ethical issues that divide church and society, in a university setting.

So hard questions must be answered about training for ministry. A major problem as far as the Church of Scotland is concerned is finance. The Church has had its ministers on the cheap for centuries really and it is very hard to break from a pattern of training where much of the cost is borne by the state.

Ann: You have just taken over as Chairman of Rutherford House. Would you say that the House can make a significant contribution to the ongoing training of ministers?

David: The House is still a relatively young institution. I think it has now earned respect in helping people to take more seriously an evangelical reading of the faith. It has made a significant contribution to the medical ethics debate and under the present warden is making an impact on greater effectiveness of ministry and eldership in the Church. We have certainly shown we are capable of good scholarship but it is a long term task we are engaged in. I hope to see an increasing denominational broadening. We suffer a little from being seen as only The Kirk and need to work together much more with evangelicals from different denominations.

Ann: Why should evangelicals support Rutherford House financially when there are so many demands on limited purses?

David: If people wish to see a strengthening and continuation of the evangelical church in Scotland! It is very evident that the Church on all sides is weakening. In terms of finance and its general standing there is great

deterioration. I think we have a tremendous opportunity to recover the role of the church as carrier of the Gospel. I've been greatly taken by the phrase 'The Church doing what only the church will do'. There is a range of things that no one else will do if the church will not do them. Basically that comes down to the message of Jesus, mission as the key identity of the Church. Rutherford House has a major contribution in helping Christian ministers to focus again effectively on what the church can do that no one else will do.

I'd like to see an increase of committed regular ongoing financial support to meet the huge range of needs and opportunities and I'd like to secure a second staff member to meet the demands.

Ann: As well as Rutherford House you have supported other centres and channels of Christian education and mission over the years, and of course you have earned a D.D. in recent years.

David: Yes, I've tried to make a contribution to the evangelical vitality and identity of different spheres of activity and service. I've spent a lot of time in UCCF and in the restructuring of Glasgow Bible College, BTI as it was, now The International Christian College. I think that deserves a great deal of support as the most mature centre for Christian training and theological study in Scotland. It's difficult to find time for all I'd like to do.

Ann: Although you have a deserved international reputation much of that contribution has been national to Scotland's evangelical life. Do you now see yourself as a kind of naturalised Scot?

David: Oh yes! Partly because I know the evangelical world in England less and less. In my generation if they are not Bishops, and a surprising number are, they are nearing retirement! If I eventually retire it will be here where I now belong, despite starting as an outsider.

Ann: Given all your international connections and English roots what do you think devolution holds for the church in Scotland?

David: I think the Kirk sees a new role for itself. Its pride in being the national church is huge and I feel it is looking to a new Parliament to expand its role. It will be very interesting to see whether there is a recovery of Scottish tradition. I've already had enquiries about what the place of the Bible had been in the earlier Scottish Parliament up to 1707. Will there be a Chaplain? Can the Church make a distinctive mark in some of the contested issues around ethics and education? The Church tries to cater for all people with the result that I think its policy on schools has lost a proper concern for the teaching of Christianity and the ethos of schools.

The crucial question is what price is the church prepared to pay to be national? I sometimes say somewhat facetiously, that the church of Scotland will remain NATIONAL long after it has ceased to be CHURCH. We have to learn again to function as a minority church which we are, in fact, without having in practice the freedoms due to a minority.

Ann: What you are saying is that the Church does not acknowledge the huge gap between perception of it as a national church and the reality a shrinking minority.

David: Exactly. We don't want to

acknowledge that the emperor has no clothes on and so we will temper all kinds of ministerial policies to cope. We will provide less explicitly Christian weddings , funerals etc. in order to cope with the sectors of society that want such ceremonies without necessarily any Christian content or commitment. That is the hugely questionable area. The very identity of the Christian Church as the body of Christ which has any bite for the gospel and for human salvation is at stake in my view.

Ann: On that controversial note we ended. David Wright's contribution will continue on many levels. He is uniquely equipped in areas of scholarship and research to promote and defend the evangelical cause. Not for the first time England's loss has been gain for Scotland and the evangelical world.

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Doing Theology for the People of God: Studies in Honour of J. I. Packer

Packer

Edited by Donald Lewis & Alister McGrath,

Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1996, 280pp, £9.99 ISBN 0-85111-450-4.

This book consists of fifteen essays, each by a different author, plus an appended Bibliography of Dr. Packer's works.

The Essays are divided into three main sections. Part One deals with Systematic Theology. Here John Stott surveys theology as a 'Multi-Dimensional' while Kenneth Kantzer discusses it as a 'Practical'. Roger Beckwith writes on 'a Theology of the Biblical Text', David Wright on Baptism and Colin Brown on 'Christology and the Quest for the Historical Jesus.'

Part II, Biblical and Exegetical, kicks off with 'The Dance between God and Humanity' by Bruce Waltke, which is actually a study in a section of Proverbs. This is followed by an essay on the Prologue to John's Gospel by William Dumbrell, and another on Second Corinthians by Paul Barnett. The final article in this section is by Howard Marshall on the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.

Part Three is a mixed bag of articles, the first on 'The Importance of Tradition for Modern Evangelicalism' by Alister McGrath, the second on Packer's 'Contribution to the Doctrine of the Inerrancy of Scripture' by Roger Nicole, and the third on his 'influence on American Evangelicalism' by Mark Noll. Peter Jensen presents a 'Vision for Preachers' in chapter 13 and James Houston writes on the 'Transmission of Reformed Theology' in chapter 14. The final chapter on 'Immanuel and the Purpose of Creation' is by Loren Wilkinson.

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Some of the chapters are quite technical and the general reader needs to be warned that few of the contributors have the lightness of touch and clarity of expression possessed by the one being honoured. Having said that, many people who have read and appreciated several of Packer's books would find something of interest here if only in the all too brief biographical Preface! The book's chief appeal, however, will be to academics and ministers.

Stanley Jebb, Dunstable

How to Trust God when Life Doesn't Make Sense

Gary Mayes,

Leicester, Crossway Books, 1995.
192pp, £5.99 ISBN 1-8568-4143-X

It could be argued that when life doesn't make sense, even this easily-read book by the pastor of Faith Community Church, Santa Ana, California, might fail to free a bruised Christian into the peace and joy of believing once again. The author, a graduate of Trinity Divinity School, Illinois, is not naive about the perplexing and confused nature of such times—witness the message on the cover design—and is sensitive to those, like Job, whose hearts cry out for silent understanding, tender actions and prayer, rather than sermons! The real usefulness of this thoroughly biblical little book may be before or after such a time of crisis, rather than during it. But you do not need a time of awful meaninglessness to benefit from reading this work. His studies of Bible characters who show both the power of overcoming faith and the depths of their despair and uncertainty, are helpful aids to the preacher and Bible student, as well as to the pastor seeking wisdom in handling people in the valley of the shadow. Each chapter ends with a 'BOTTOM LINE' – one

sentence which sums up the problem addressed and the answer proposed. As an example, both of the succinctness of these, plus the recurring Americanisms the reader must get used to, is: 'God is good, even when life stinks.' Throughout, the concern of the writer is that we learn to wait upon the Lord in order to renew our strength, and see the healing value of ceasing from fleshly struggle, and 'doing nothing' till the Spirit leads us through and out and on again. This book faces the battles as well as the blessings of knowing Christ, and assures us through life's many mists and mysteries of the love of the Father who does all things well.

David Grant, Dalry

Time with God : Renewing your Devotional Life

Stephen Eyre,

Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1995.
203pp, £5.99. ISBN 0-85110-886-5.

The writer is an Associate Pastor for Discipleship at a Presbyterian Church in West Chester, U.S.A., and in this book, he evaluates the significance of the Christian believer's 'quiet time' with God. In each chapter, he explores a different element of a 'quiet time', from settling in God's presence, to finding a quiet time companion. Following each chapter, he outlines a suggested short bible study guide, with questions, relating to the topic discussed.

Eyre defines a 'quiet time', on page 33, as a 'meeting with God', and while this description could apply equally to public worship, the author's concern is to avoid the idea of a set of routines and techniques. Such a meeting with God on a regular basis is, according to the author a vital necessity, especially in the modern world with its 'crazy pace of life', p26. He provides several precedents in scripture and in church

ministry to encourage us concerning the value of the 'quiet time'.

The core chapter is perhaps the seventh, in which Eyre outlines a quiet time pattern and discusses various elements. These include what he calls, 'warming up and slowing down,' (he quotes Luther for confirmation!); study and reading God's word; meditation and reflection; and prayer. He draws useful distinctions between biblical and eastern meditation on pages 98 – 100 and makes some useful practical suggestions. At various points in the book, the writer alludes to the so-called spiritual disciplines and comments favourably on such practices as solitude, silence, fasting and keeping a journal.

This is a well-written, thought-provoking book and is very accessible for the motivated church member because of the easy style and its practical guidelines. At times, this reviewer felt that the writer's particular temperament influenced his assessment of the value of certain practices rather than biblical teaching. Whether many church leaders would be open to sponsor three hour of retreats of silence at their churches, is debatable! (p192). However, many Christians will find help from the book and its honest assessment of the different phases experienced in the devotional life. Eyre's exhortation to pursue bible-based discipline and delight in meeting with God will encourage many believers, who struggle in this area.

Martin Allen

Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Places

John J. Bimson (Consulting editor).

Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1995.
319pp £14.99 ISBN 0-85110-657-9

Invariably Biblical events include references to the place where they

occurred. This encyclopedia, with contributions from over 70 scholars, includes familiar names along with the less recognised. Towns and cities, villages and settlements, streams and rivers, countries and states are all listed in this outstanding reference book. Attractive maps and diagrams, charts and coloured photographs illustrate the text.

Topography and archaeology are integral. Some entries include more than others. 'Palestine', for example, deals exclusively with physical features, climate and vegetation, flora and water supply, agriculture and settlements. With 'Masada', its structure is detailed, along with its history. Where exact location is uncertain, as with 'Emmaus' and 'Gethsemane', the various possibilities are presented. Archaeological findings are shown to throw light on Biblical stories, as in the case of Tutankhamun, who lived within 100 years of Moses.

Historic cultural and social contexts of events are also described. For instance, under 'Babylonia', the history is followed by an account of its religion, the pantheon, priesthood, festivals and literature. The section on 'Ugarit, Ras Shamra' includes comparisons between its ritual system and that in Leviticus, and what the hymns reveal of the Canaanite religion. 'Cities of refuge' provides a map, but also an explanation of the law of retribution and the altar as an asylum. Under 'Roman Empire', there is a description of the imperialist philosophy and administrative system, alongside New Testament thought on the Empire.

There are Biblical references throughout, and attention is given to deeper theological implications. Thus connection is made between message and location of the seven churches in Revelation. Under 'Mount Sinai', its use by Stephen in Acts 6, Paul in

Galatians and the writer in Hebrews is explored.

This encyclopedia is a delightful resource for teachers, travellers and those who enjoy browsing. The bibliography which follows most entries gives scope for further reading. Highly recommended.

Fiona Barnard, St Andrews

The Church Under Fire

Stephen Travis,
Oxford, The Bible Reading Fellowship,
1995. 144pp. £5.99 ISBN 0-7459-30972

I found this book both interesting and infuriating. The author gives the aim of the book as being to '*help today's reader sit alongside the first readers of the book of Revelation and hear afresh what the living Christ has to say to his people*'.

The book is set out in nine chapters. The first deals with the opening chapter of Revelation, the next seven chapters deal with the letters to the Seven Churches Rev 2:1–3:21 and the final chapter looks at the message of Revelation ch21-22.

At the end of each chapter there are thought-provoking questions which can be used both as a personal reflection or for use in group discussions. This, however is where the book is infuriating as the first question in each case is exactly the same, this brought me to screaming point by the end of chapter three.

It must be said in fairness though that the rest of the questions were extremely good and would make a excellent starting point for group discussion.

This book should be read by all those who are engaged in active ministry. It could also be used by individual Church groups as study of where are we at and how can we follow our Lord's commands for his Church

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The Church is under attack at the moment on all sides, having read the book I am sure that the reader will take heart from its message, for the Church is no more under attack as we approach the twenty-first century than it was in the first century.

We can all take heart from the message that '*Jesus has not gone off people, but stays with us through good times and bad*'.

Russel Smith, Dingwall

Suddenly Single. When a Partner Leaves

Phil Stanton,
Eastbourne, Kingsway, 1996, 128pp.
£4.99 ISBN 0854766456

For me this book made poignant reading. Phil Stanton is himself in ministry and he suffered the pain of his wife leaving him. He freely admits that although he had counselled people in the past it was not until he suddenly became single himself that he started to understand what they had been feeling. The story is told from both the forsaken husband and the forsaken wife's point of view. All the questions that would be pondered are asked — how it feels to be betrayed, why this has happened, the question of revenge and getting back at the person who has hurt you, the apportioning of blame, the thought that this has happened because you are not lovable, and the problem of coping with the inexorable pain.

Nonetheless the book ends on a positive note — answering the question 'Will I ever be happy again?' Taking biblical truth, Stanton urges his reader never to underestimate the power of God to turn bad things to good in our lives. He looks at the positive sides of loneliness and need. The question of remarriage with all its implicit problems is also looked at. Stanton warns that it is fraught with dangers if

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the departed partner is still very present and you still love that person and that you cannot remarry if you are looking for someone else in the new partner. He admits that at one stage he did not believe that he could ever be happy again, having known the deepest, most bitter anguish. Yet now he acknowledges there are times he can be so happy he wants to cry. He urges the reader to trust in God because in him she/he will be set free. This is a book full of great hard-earned wisdom which answers the needs both of those on the other side of a broken marriage and those who want to help them.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

Divine Mosaic – Windows on God from around the World

Paul Gordon Chandler

London, Triangle, 1997, 134pp, £6.99
ISBN 0-281-05008-2

This is a book which rejoices in the diversity of the church. The reader is taken with the writer on his personal journeys around the world and is immersed in the rich church traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy, Latin America, the Middle East, South East Asia and Africa. Paul Chandler blends his own wide experience with a little of the cultural history, Biblical commentary and often, a dash of gentle humour. Always the distinctive feature of each tradition is clearly underlined and extolled, with the result that the book should prove a persuasive antidote to those who compare other traditions, liturgies and church practices with their own, and find them wanting. For Paul Chandler rather, they are all part of the 'Divine Mosaic' and, as he says, 'these many and varied expressions of the Christian faith are windows on God', encouraging our own devotional life and our growth as Christians.

The author does not attempt an exhaustive analysis of Christianity in

the six geographical regions pinpointed, but he does focus on one prominent factor from which Western Christians can learn. We are reminded of the awesome majesty of God, by the reverence which characterizes the Eastern Orthodox church. The spotlight shines on joyful celebration in Latin America, the spirit of perseverance in the Middle East, the importance and centrality of Jesus in South Asia, the mystery of the 'God of surprises' in East Asia and the liberating power of the gospel in Africa.

Given that Paul Chandler must be well aware that 'for example' is not proof, his personal and often lively anecdotal experiences lend credence and interest to his observations. There is though, a slightly contrived feel about the way he states his theory about each tradition and then by means of his own experience and by the use of Biblical texts and stories he makes the facts fit the theory. Nonetheless, I found this an enjoyable and refreshing book. It is an informative source of illustrations for church leaders, for anyone exploring new modes of worship and, for us all who desire to enlarge our vision of God:

One church in many many places

One faith with many many faces

One world with many many ways

Of singing praises to the Lord of Life.

Sally E Trotter, Evanton, Ross-shire

Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom

Steven J. Land,

Sheffield, Academic Press, 1993,
239pp, £14.95 ISBN 1-85075-442-X

This is a theological account of Pentecostal spirituality – written for Pentecostals and others. Examining 'feelings' as well as 'beliefs' and 'behaviour', Land analyses the early roots of Pentecostalism, its beliefs, songs and testimonies, and shows how

Christian affections integrate and undergird Pentecostalism. Finally he offers 'a trinitarian re-visioning of Pentecostal spirituality', arguing that 'a passion for the kingdom of God is ultimately a passion for God'.

For anyone wanting to know 'what makes Pentecostals tick', this book is excellent. Its strength is the breadth of its canvas; its weakness is that everything becomes grist to the author's mill. For example, Pentecostalism is 'more Eastern than Western' in that it understands spirituality as participation in the divine life (theosis), but there is no recognition of how and why Pentecostalism divides from the Eastern (and the Western) tradition on its understanding of baptism.

Land starts with the Spirit, and allows that the Word (God revealed in Christ) is equal with the Spirit – a far cry from Protestant 'afterthought' theology where the Spirit is concerned! He (fairly) accuses Roman Catholicism of subjugating the Spirit to the Church, and Fundamentalism of subjugating the Spirit to the Bible in the sense that the key work of the Spirit is to witness to the inspiration of Scripture, which is then interpreted by human reason. Land describes Barth, Wesley and Moltmann as his 'dialogue partners'. He cites Barth's comment that he could have written a different kind of Dogmatics if he had started with Pentecost.

Land argues that what is distinctive about Pentecostalism is not tongues, or Spirit-baptism, but the conviction that we live in the last days. But this is affirmed by many Protestants, especially fundamentalists! He is on surer ground when he argues that Pentecostalism is 'crisis-theology', and perhaps this explains his appreciation of Karl Barth's early and late writings. He sets Pentecostalism firmly in the

early church tradition of linking prayer and theology. And the expression 'prayer concert' is given its proper locus in Pentecostal experience.

He argues that Pentecostals are three not two-blessing Christians (justification, sanctification, baptism with the Spirit), and stresses the historical link with John Wesley. While speaking in tongues is regarded as the evidence of Spirit Baptism, hardly anything is actually said about its nature in the whole book – it is simply 'eschatological speech'!

As you might expect from research carried out only in the USA, things Scottish are not carefully distinguished – for example, Scottish Common Sense philosophy for some reason, is linked with Warfield as an example of 'fundamentalist tradition', and the Irvingites are mentioned in the same breath as Finney, Moody and so on. But it is a useful book for the person with some theological background.

Jock Stein

Evangelicals and the Word of God

Paul–Andre Dupois

Suffolk, Orthos, 1993, 46pp, £2.50
ISBN 1-874694-04-4

This address from a Dijon Pastoral Conference with its strong warnings (in love) about the increasingly cavalier attitude to and use of Scripture within evangelicalism, was considered momentous and so had to be published. Contextualisation, dynamic equivalence, interest in social action, use of drama, and much more are condemned. Only if we share the author's interpretation of inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy are we faithful to Scripture and hence to the Lord. Otherwise we are on a slippery slope and worse, and likely to drag others with us through our errors. If you agree with the author you will

think this is something that needs to be said: if not, you will certainly not be convinced by this.

Gordon R. Palmer, Edinburgh.

Revival & Revivalism. The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858

Iain H. Murray

Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994,

480pp, £12.95 ISBN 0-85151-660-2

This is an excellent book and a 'must' for all ministers of the gospel. The author contrasts the methods of the Calvinistic preaching of the late 17th century with the 'New Measures' of The Anxious Seat, and The Mourners Bench which developed under the teaching of Charles G Finney. The theology of Finney was really the old heresy of Pelagianism – man is not born with a corrupt nature, he is just using his will wrongly. Finney said that God 'has no right to command unless we have power to obey... God is tyrannical if He commands that which is impracticable'. He reasoned that to speak of the inability of sinners on account of a fallen nature slanders God and charges him with infinite tyranny in commanding men to do that which they have no power to do. Finney blamed Christians for the lack of revivals saying 'If the Church would do all her duty, the millennium may come in this country in three years...' Murray exposes the fallacy of comparing figures of claimed converts from the revivalist camp with the traditional Calvinistic churches. The revivalist numbers were taken from those who went forward the first time they heard the gospel whereas the Calvinistic numbers were taken from church members – only those who had come to the Lord's Table after several months under conviction of sin. Many in the converts under the

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revivalist movements were not to be found after several months. This book will encourage preachers who believe that conversion is the work of the Spirit of God in the heart of man and affects his whole life thereafter.

Donald Macaskill, Dundee

Aspects of Authority

J.I. Packer

1991, 38pp, £1.50

These three papers, given in 1986, examine authority in our message, our preaching-and-counselling and our decision-making.

The first is a call for competence and depth in our message. Let our perspective be God-centred, Trinitarian and practically other-worldly. Let our themes be of covenant, new creation and new community. Think. God makes friends!

In the second Packer proposes two useful grids by which we can check that we are God's mouthpiece in preaching and counselling.

Thirdly, Packer states seven Biblical principles for decision-making, emphasising wisdom – and spelling out its essential features – as God's primary method in guidance.

Not vintage Packer, but the grids in chapter 2 and the common sense in chapter 3 make good value at £1.50.

C. Peter White, Glasgow.